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Desolate Era

(莽荒纪)

Book 17: Celestial Immortal

Fate had never been kind to Ji Ning. Wracked by illnesses and infirm his entire life on Earth, Ning knew early on that he would die as a teenager. What he didn't know was that there really was such a thing as life after death, and that the universe was a far larger place than he thought. A lucky twist of fate (one of the few in Ning's life) meant that Ning was reborn into a world of Immortals and monsters, of Ki Refiners and powerful Fiendgods, a world where Dynasties lasted for millions of years. A world which is both greater...and yet also smaller...than he ever could imagine. He would have the opportunity to join them, and in this life, Ning swore to himself, he would never let himself be weak again! The Era he was born into was a Desolate one, but Ning would make it his era.

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Chapter 1 – Ji Ning Is Still Alive!

The Black-White College had many mountain peaks, and the estates of the formal disciples were usually located atop one of them.

On the mountain path of a nameless mountain peak of the Black-White College.

The moon hung high in the sky, and the dreamy moonlight wafted down like gauze upon Ji Ning and Yu Wei. Ning and Yu Wei were currently holding hands together, strolling on the mountain path like mortals.

“This is nice,” Yu Wei said softly.

“Eh?” Ning looked at Yu Wei.

Yu Wei smiled as she glanced at Ning. She had always been as beautiful as an Immortal fairy, a true peerless beauty. This smile of hers, which came from the bottom of her heart, caused Ning to instantly feel intoxicated. Yu Wei said, “In recent years, I haven’t felt at ease for a single moment. I’ve always been worrying about this or that. I’m holding your hand, and I feel so calm right now...I don’t feel worried about anything.”

“It was my rashness.” Ning felt guilt; last time, he had indeed been too arrogant in acting against the Youngflame clan.

“It’s not your fault, junior apprentice-brother. Who would’ve thought that they would have a Protocosmic spirit-treasure like the Worldhold Pagoda? It is far too rare, after all, for Celestial Immortals to be in possession of such spirit-treasures. Even if they do have one...ones that can rip through reality and teleport you elsewhere are even rarer,” Yu Wei said.

Ning laughed. “Enough about that. Senior apprentice-sister, I haven’t congratulated you yet about becoming a Celestial Immortal! You were even faster than me.”

"Even after I became a Celestial Immortal, I've still had headaches every day." Yu Wei gently kicked aside a little stone that was in her path. The stone struck a distant tree, causing a bit of snow to fall down from the trees branches.

"What's wrong?" Ning asked.

"You've been gone for more than eighteen years. Stillwater Commandery, however, has changed dramatically," Yu Wei said. "For example...the current Marquis of Stillwater is no longer Northmont Yin; it is Northmont Blacktiger."

"Eh?!" Ning was puzzled. "Northmont Blacktiger?"

In the past, Northmont Blacktiger and Northmont Yin had struggled for the position of Marquis, and in the end Northmont Yin had won.

Even after Ning had returned and joined into an alliance with Celestial Immortals Unity and Hunchmont, the Northmont clan of Stillwater hadn't changed Northmont Yin's position. Why was it that during Ning's disappearance of eighteen years, Northmont Blacktiger would end up having taken the position?

"Northmont Yin died," Yu Wei said.

"What?! Could it be that Stillwater Commandery was in such a state of chaos that even the Marquis was assassinated?" Ning was shocked.

"It's even worse than you think," Yu Wei said. "Northmont Yin wasn't assassinated. He was executed by Celestial Immortal Unity. The reason why he was executed was because more than half of the high-level members of the Northmont clan wanted to throw their support to the Seamless Gate. When they made this recommendation to Celestial Immortal Unity, all of these traitors, including the ones who had supported Northmont Yin secret, were wiped out. Not one was spared."

Ning was truly shocked now. "How could this have happened?!"

"It all started with Celestial Immortal Hunchmont being kidnapped." Yu Wei began to narrate the tale of how she and Celestial Immortal had been ambushed and trapped, and she even gave him a rough overview of the situation in the entire Grand Xia.

At the peak of the mountain.

Ning and Yu Wei were seated by a cliff, looking at the night sky.

"I didn't imagine that the Seamless Gate would have become this brash and bold." Ning frowned. "Prior to this, the Grand Xia Dynasty had been keeping them in check, but now...they actually have dared to assassinate this many Celestial Immortals? Are they really trying to start a war?"

"I don't know." Yu Wei shook her head.

Eighteen years ago, the Grand Xia Dynasty had been calm on the surface, at least; very, very few Celestial Immortals had perished.

But now, Celestial Immortals were dying right and left, one after the other! The Seamless Gate had even dared to carry out actions like kidnapping Hunchmont to force Unity to surrender; from this, one could see how bold they had become!

"Didn't they inform the Xia Emperor?" Ning asked. "Since the Seamless Gate cares about Celestial Immortal Unity this much...the Xia Emperor wouldn't just give up on him that easily, right?"

"Of course we did," Yu Wei said. "Just this very day, we received word from the Xia Emperor. He sent someone to notify us that many Celestial Immortals throughout the entire Grand Xia Dynasty are being threatened, and have received final diplomatic notes of warning. Too many are asking for his support; he's asking us Celestial Immortals to help each other out."

"The Xia Emperor is just going to let things happen, come what may?" Ning frowned.

"Senior Unity really is quite impressive, though; a while ago, the Seamless Gate sent thirty-six Celestial Immortals to assault him en masse, but they were still defeated," Yu Wei said. "To kill Celestial Immortal Unity won't be easy. By contrast, our Black-White College... well, we aren't as strong as senior Unity, so we've been suffering quite a bit for it."

Ning now understood what had been worrying Yu Wei.

The Black-White College was standing alongside Unity. When the Seamless Gate went to act against Unity, they'd probably throw the Black-White College into the mix as well; after all, the Black-White College had two Celestial Immortals within their ranks.

Killing Celestial Immortal Unity might be very difficult...but killing the Celestial Immortals of the Black-White College was much easier by comparison. Yu Wei and Immortal Diancai were quite ordinary; they had just recently overcome their tribulations, after all. They were far from being comparable to Celestial Immortal Unity.

"But I'm back now, right?" Ning smiled.

"Junior apprentice-brother, you haven't overcome your tribulation." Yu Wei actually shook her head. "The Seamless Gate is far too powerful. We have to be careful."

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That very night.

Within Immortal Diancai's estate.

"Master." Ning looked at Immortal Diancai.

"It's good that you are back. It's good that you are back." Immortal Diancai looked at Ning, letting out a long sigh, then smiled. "You unfilial disciple! When you came back, you didn't come see me; you went to go see your Dao-companion first!"

The nearby Yu Wei was laughing.

"Don't blame me, Master! I admit to my wrongdoings." Ning began to laugh as well.

"Sit, first! Later, senior Unity shall arrive," Immortal Diancai said.

A short time later.

A youth with loose hair and a gray robe came walking in. Ning, Immortal Diancai, and Yu Wei all rose to their feet.

"Ji Ning has returned." The gray-robed youth smiled and nodded. "I heard that you previously killed two mighty Celestial Immortals of the Youngflame clan. How valiant! You were able to overcome the karmic sinflames and to return to us; I imagine that anyone who hears about this would be filled with admiration for you."

"You praise me too much, senior. I was just a bit luckier than most; otherwise, I wouldn't have been able to come back at all," Ning said.

"Sit, all of you," Celestial Immortal Unity said.

The four immediately all sat down.

Unity looked at Ning. "I imagine you know everything now, Ji Ning."

"I just heard from them. I didn't imagine that in the past eighteen years, the Grand Xia Dynasty would've changed this much. The Seamless Gate has already begun to shed all pretenses of cordiality." Ning shook his head. "Celestial Immortal Hunchmont was captured. Alas..."

"When the storm comes, who can avoid it?" Unity looked towards Ning. "The Seamless Gate gave us their final warning, and I've naturally made my own preparations. This entire city of Stillwater has always been the base for my Northmont clan. One generation after another, we have set down countless formations in this place. I want to ask your Black-White College to help me control the

formations of Stillwater City, so that I can focus whole-heartedly on fighting against the Seamless Gate. There's no need for the Black-White College to exit the formation."

"Today, the Xia Emperor sent me a messenger. Many are under threat right now, and he's unable to assist me, which is why I've made this decision. I wanted to tell Yu Wei and Diancai tomorrow, but since you came back today, Ji Ning, I came to speak to you all tonight," Unity said.

Ning, Yu Wei, and Diancai all exchanged a glance.

"Since you've made the request, senior Unity...our Black-White College will definitely strive to ensure you are not disappointed by us," Ning said.

Celestial Immortal Unity had realized something...

The Black-White College had three mighty experts. Yu Wei and Ji Ning were Dao-companions, while Immortal Diancai and Ji Ning were master and disciple! In fact, Ji Ning had once guarded his master during his master's tribulation and fought with utter ferocity, while Diancai, in turn, had been willing to face off against the Youngflame clan even when he had merely been at the Void-level; from this, one could see how close the two of them were. Clearly, Ji Ning was capable of influencing both Yu Wei and Immortal Diancai, which made him the true leader of the Black-White College.

After chatting for a bit longer, Celestial Immortal Unity departed.

Ning, Yu Wei, and Immortal Diancai, the three mighty experts of the Black-White College, were now discussing amongst themselves.

"Our Black-White College is the weakest side in this fight, regardless of whether we compare ourselves to Celestial Immortal Unity or the Seamless Gate," Immortal Diancai said. "Senior Unity knows that we are in a tough spot. This is for the best. We shall stay within the formation and provide support. If even the formation is unable to

withstand their attacks, then we'll use Greater Teleportation to leave."

"Right."

Yu Wei and Ning both nodded.

Ning didn't say much. It was true that he had become far more powerful over the course of eighteen years of nonstop battles, and he was probably even superior to Celestial Immortal Unity in terms of power! However, given that the Seamless Gate was a major power that dared to act against the Grand Xia Dynasty in such a brash, arrogant fashion...they might suddenly produce a True Immortal or Empyrean God who would wipe Ning out.

"Ji Ning, the Heavenly Treasures Mountain has stationed someone in our Black-White College," Immortal Diancai said. "They've been waiting for news of you. Now that you are back...should we let the Heavenly Treasures Mountain know?"

"What's this?" Ning was surprised.

The Heavenly Treasures Mountain had actually permanently stationed someone here, waiting for news regarding him?

It seemed as though the Xia Emperor truly did care quite a bit about his status.

"Go ahead and tell them," Ning said.

His own master, Patriarch Subhuti, was good friends with Daofather Crimsonbright. The Xia Emperor had treated him fairly well; there was no need to hide this from him.

"Alright." Immortal Diancai nodded.

The imperial capital of the Grand Xia. The Skylight Palace.

The black-robed Xia Emperor was seated facing a white-haired elder.

They were playing a game of stones.

Click! The Xia Emperor frowned.

"Xiamang, if you bare your fangs too openly, you'll suffer for it," the white-haired elder said with a laugh, then pressed his stone onto the board. "It's better for you to take a step back and look at the bigger picture."

The Xia Emperor, however, didn't pay him any attention.

Click! Click! Click! The sound of chess stones being pressed onto the board rang out throughout the hall.

"You lose." The white-haired elder rose to his feet. "Xiamang, spend a little time and think things over. But of course...you remain a descendant of our Primordial Imperial Clan. There's no way you can let yourself be so casually abused by others. Whether you choose to retreat or to fight, you need to do it in a beautiful manner. If you do need help, come find me."

"Thank you, Uncle." The Xia Emperor rose to his feet.

The white-haired elder laughed, then soared into the skies and disappeared.

The Xia Emperor, however, continued to frown.

A short while later, a streak of light flew in; it was Skyfox.

"Master." Immortal Skyfox strode in.

"What is it?" The Xia Emperor asked.

"Ji Ning has returned," Immortal Skyfox said in a low voice.

The Xia Emperor was startled. "He came back? Alive?"

"Yes. He came back just last night; we received news just this morning," Immortal Skyfox said.

"He managed to make it back alive? I even went so far as to speak to Venomfreak about this. Venomfreak said that he had exiled Ji Ning to the Nihilum Zone." The Xia Emperor frowned. "The Nihilum Zone of the Primordial Ruinworld...that truly is a boundless, vast place. The voidwaves there are incredibly powerful; in order to leave that place while going against the voidwaves, one has to at least have the power of a True God or Daofather. It must have been that mysterious Daofather master of his who intervened. This Daofather seems to care about his disciples quite a bit; he actually went into the Nihilum Zone to search for him!"

"Then...with regards to Stillwater Commandery..." Immortal Skyfox said in a whispered voice.

Chapter 2 – King Yan Comes to Visit

The Xia Emperor shook his head. “The entire Grand Xia Dynasty is being shaken by this storm. More than sixty percent of my 3600 commanderies are requesting assistance from me! No matter how formidable the Seamless Gate is, there’s no way they can possibly act against that many marquises and clans at once. In addition, according to the intelligence I have, some of those requesting support have actually surrendered to the Seamless Gate long ago.”

The Seamless Gate was indeed formidable; for them to be able to convince more than half of the high-level members of the Northmont clan to join them was a testament to their might. Within the Grand Xia Dynasty, there were indeed quite a few clans who had already joined their side.

“They’ve already joined the Seamless Gate, but they still beg me for assistance.” The Xia Emperor frowned. “Right now...I don’t have a clear picture of the situation. More than sixty percent of the marquises are asking for my assistance, but which ones actually need help, while which ones are faking it?”

“Although the Northmont clan of Stillwater claims Celestial Immortal Hunchmont was captured alive...that was a mere capture. Who knows if that is just part of a plot?” The Xia Emperor said.

“Understood.” Immortal Skyfox nodded.

“Right now, although there are some clashes, my control over the entire Grand Xia is still fairly stable.” The Xia Emperor said softly, “The true war has yet to start. We need to stand firm and not act about in a disorderly fashion. Even though the Seamless Gate has begun to move...let them. The more they move, the more of themselves they reveal to me. For now, let my blade remain in its sheath...because one it comes out, it will stab them in their weak points! The Seamless Gate wishes to take away my world of the Grand Xia? Hmph...let’s see if they can force me to accept it!”

Immortal Skyfox nodded.

"Still...Ji Ning's potential truly is remarkable. Even before undergoing his Celestial Tribulation, he was able to kill two Celestial Immortals. Despite having trained for less than a century, he was capable of enduring karmic sinflames. I imagine that he will soon be undergoing his tribulation. He...is going to be an important chess piece," the Xia Emperor said. "And, based on what my master said...Ji Ning is definitely on our side."

The Xia Emperor viewed Ning with great importance.

After all...Ji Ning's accomplishments to date had all been simply too unearthly. At the Void-level, he had slaughtered two Celestial Immortals, then withstood karmic sinflames. Once a monster like this broke through to the Celestial Immortal level after overcoming the tribulation...he would most likely become one of the most supreme Celestial Immortals right away, perhaps even possessing the combat power of a Pure Yang True Immortal! Most importantly of all...Ji Ning had an incredible background. To befriend Ji Ning was equivalent to befriending a mysterious Daofather. How could the Xia Emperor not view this as being extremely important?

"Right. Go and tell King Yan that Ji Ning has returned," the Xia Emperor said.

"Alright," Immortal Skyfox said respectfully.

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The imperial capital. King Yan's Estate.

King Yan had arrived in a flower garden. He stared at Yuchi Xiyue, seated within a distant pavilion. He couldn't help but secretly shake his head. When Ji Ning had gone to act against the Youngflame clan, he had told Yuchi Xiyue in advance. Xiyue had been filled with both hope as well as worry for Ning...but in the end, Ning had been covered by karmic sinflames and driven out of the world of the

Grand Xia. Xiyue had always paid close attention to information regarding Ning, but no matter how hard she tried, she couldn't find out anything regarding his return from that battle. She had gone to ask King Yan, and thus learned what had happened.

Ever since that day she had learned that Ning's chances of survival were slim...Xiyue had never smiled again.

"Little brother..." Xiyue always felt as though something was missing from her heart. She was incapable of smiling, now.

"Xiyue." A voice rang out.

Xiyue turned her head, then hurriedly rose her feet to greet the man. "Grandpa."

"Let me tell you some good news," King Yan said with a chuckle.

"Good news?" Xiyue was puzzled.

"Ji Ning...has returned." King Ya laughed.

Xiyue trembled, then revealed a look of wild joy and excitement. She hurriedly grabbed King Yan by the hand. "Grandpa, is this true? My little brother has really come back? He's returned from that danger zone? You aren't lying to me, are you?"

"Mm. It was the Xia Emperor who told me...and Ji Ning is currently in the Black-White College of Stillwater City right now," King Yan said.

"He's at the Black-White College?" Xiyue felt more alive than she had in a long time. She immediately said, "I'm going to Stillwater City right away!"

"Let's go together. I want to see Ji Ning as well," King Yan said.

"Alright. Let's go right now!" Xiyue didn't want to wait for even a single moment; she had to see Ning with her own eyes before she would believe it all.

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Even before the Xia Emperor had learned of Ji Ning's return...the marvelously capable Seamless Gate had learned of it as well.

Whoooosh.

A cold wind blew. A golden-robed Celestial Immortal was standing at the top of a mountain peak. This golden-robed Celestial Immortal was quite bulky, and in fact was slightly chubby. He had a stubbly beard, and his eyes shone like copper. The golden robes he bore looked just like a set of golden armor. He simply waited there, bored and restless, at the top of that mountain peak.

Swoosh. A streak of light flew towards him from far away, alighting on the mountain peak; it was Celestial Immortal Arcanum.

"Arcanum," the golden-robed envoy said calmly.

"Envoy." Celestial Immortal immediately smiled, not showing any of his customary arrogance for fear of offending this envoy. "Might I ask why you wish to speak with our Youngflame clan, Envoy?"

"Our Seamless Gate has never shown your Youngflame clan any malice. We've always been helping you...and now, I'm going to help you again." The golden-robed envoy laughed, but even when laughing, his savage, ferocious face remained terrifying to behold. "A while ago, you had a rather nasty battle with that Ji Ning, right? In fact, two of your Celestial Immortals died, and in the end, you used the Worldhold Pagoda to exile Ji Ning away into the Nihilum Zone of the Primordial Ruinworld, yes?"

"Right, right. That's exactly right," Celestial Immortal Arcanum said hurriedly.

Although he had a smile on his face, in his heart Arcanum was cursing loudly.

How had this secret slipped out?

Very, very few people knew that the Youngflame clan had used the Worldhold Pagoda to deal with Ji Ning. Only the Xia Emperor and Ji Ning's friends knew. However, logically speaking, neither Ji Ning's friends nor the Xia Emperor would go tell the Seamless Gate about this...and yet, somehow, the Seamless Gate had still found out. They had even come to ask the Youngflame clan about this, at which point the Youngflame clan had been forced to admit that they had indeed exiled Ji Ning to the Nihilum Zone of the Primordial Ruinworld.

In truth, the Youngflame clan wasn't worried about this being made public knowledge. The Nihilum Zone was incredibly vast, after all; even a True God or Daofather who went there to investigate would have to spend countless years before completely searching the place. In addition, True Gods and Daofathers were generally unwilling to spend much time there; after all, as the saying went, if one often walked by the riverside, one's shoes would eventually get wet. If they stayed in the Nihilum Zone too long, they might run into some powerful foes from the Primordial Ruinworld.

"The Seamless Gate truly seems to be able to penetrate through any seam," Arcanum mused silently to himself. "Not even the Heavenly Treasures Mountain of the Xia Emperor comes close to the Seamless Gate in terms of intelligence reports."

"I've come to notify your Youngflame clan...that your hated foe, Ji Ning, is still alive. And...he's already back." The golden-robed envoy smiled merrily as he looked at Celestial Immortal Arcanum.

Arcanum's face instantly changed. "Impossible!!!" He couldn't help but blurt out these words.

"Impossible?" The golden-robed envoy lifted an eyebrow.

"We sent him to the Nihilum Zone of the Primordial Ruinworld! Not even an Empyrean God could escape from that place; only a True God or Daofather has a chance! Even if an exalted True God or Daofather was to go search for him...how could they be so lucky as to find Ji Ning within the infinitely vast Nihilum Zone in just eighteen

short years?" Arcanum shook his head. "Even if he was apprenticed to a True God or a Daofather...I refuse to believe a True God or a Daofather would be willing to commit himself to such a painstaking search, or be able to find him so quickly. There's no way Ji Ning could be that lucky!"

"Yes, I didn't believe it either." The golden-robed envoy shook his head and sighed. "But alas, Ji Ning is within Stillwater City right now. At this very moment, he is flirting and cuddling with that Dao-companion of his, Yu Wei, within the Black-White College."

"He's at Stillwater City right now?" Arcanum was now truly stunned.

"Yes." The golden-robed envoy nodded.

Arcanum had an extremely ugly look on his face right now, and his thoughts were jumbled.

If Ji Ning had returned alive...then things had completely changed.

First of all, for him to return meant that, without question, Ji Ning had a True God or Daofather standing behind him! When the Youngflame clan had fought against Ji Ning, they had been worried that Ji Ning had apprenticed himself to a Daofather, true, but they felt that given the exalted status of a Daofather, Ji Ning shouldn't have been so lucky as to actually have been apprenticed to one. The chances of that having happened had to be low.

But now...it had indeed been proven to be the case! Ji Ning truly had become the disciple of a True God or a Daofather!

And secondly!

The Youngflame clan knew exactly how powerful Ji Ning was. A young fellow like him who hadn't even undergone his tribulation had been able to slaughter two mighty Celestial Immortals. Even when battling the eight of them, he hadn't been at a disadvantage at all. Given his terrifying power...once he overcame his tribulation and become a Celestial Immortal, he could become a calamity for the

Youngflame clan.

And this monster...this utter monster had a True God or a Daofather backing him!

This was a nightmare!

"He...really does have a True God or a Daofather as his master. And...he's back." Arcanum was completely panicking right now. He knew very well that this would be a disaster for his Youngflame clan...a disaster which the Youngflame would not be able to avoid!

"If...the Youngflame clan was to join our Seamless Gate, then we would be willing to help you deal with Ji Ning," the golden-robed envoy said with a laugh. "You might be afraid of the Daofather behind him, but we, the Seamless Gate, are not. Alright...you can go back now and spend some time thinking on this."

Whoosh.

A series of spatial ripples appeared around the golden-robed envoy. Moments later, he disappeared into thin air.

Celestial Immortal Arcanum stood there on the mountain peak, an ugly look on his face. Moments later, he too used a spatial teleport to depart, having headed back to report this information to the Ancestor of the Youngflame clan, Immortal Venomfreak.

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Stillwater City. The Black-White College.

Ning didn't realize that both the Seamless Gate and the Youngflame clan had found out right away about his return. However, even if he did realize that they knew...Ning wasn't afraid. To deal with the current Ji Ning wouldn't be easy as it was to deal with the Ji Ning of eighteen years ago.

"Ji Ning, King Yan and Princess Xiyue have come to visit," Immortal

Jadesea sent through his divine sense.

"Princess Xiyue? King Yan?" Ji Ning, who had been sipping wine alongside Yu Wei, hastily rose to his feet. Ning had spent the entire night with Yu Wei. The two had whispered sweet nothings to each other, and also had discussed many matters. Yu Wei now knew the real relationship between Ning and Xiyue.

"Come, let's go greet them," Ning said hurriedly. "Before I went to fight against the Youngflame clan, I told my cousin about it. I was completely confident in my chances; I thought that everything was under my control. And yet...man proposes, Heaven disposes. In the end, I was exiled for eighteen years. My cousin must have been worrying over me for all eighteen of these years."

"She came to see you as soon as she learned that you were back. Clearly, she cares about you immensely," Yu Wei said.

The two flew over, shoulder-to-shoulder, into the skies.

They immediately saw the distant Immortal Jadesea guiding King Yan and Yuchi Xiyue towards them. Xiyue stared towards Ning from far away, and upon seeing him her eyes lit up right away. It was true; her little brother truly had come back!

"Senior apprentice-brother Jadesea, allow me to take care of King Yan and the princess," Ning said.

Immortal Jadesea knew that these two had come to see Ji Ning, and so he immediately nodded and departed.

Ning and Yu Wei led King Yan and Xiyue down into Yu Wei's residence. At present, Yu Wei's residence didn't have even a single servant in it; all of them had been sent to Darknorth Peak. Clearly, Ning and Yu Wei wanted to be alone and to not be disturbed by anyone.

As they landed together, Xiyue could no longer hold back. "Little brother, you scared me half to death! If you really died...then I really

would be the only member of the Yuchi clan left."

"I'm not gonna die that easily," Ning said with a laugh.

The two immediately began to chat with each other. Yu Wei added in a few words on the side, but King Yan said almost nothing.

As the conversation began to wind down...finally, King Yan spoke out.
"Ji Ning, do you remember the task you handed to me?"

Ning's face instantly turned slightly red. He hurriedly said, "You've found information regarding my parents and their reincarnations?"

Chapter 3 – His Parent's Lives, Past and Present

Years ago, Ji Ning had asked King Yan to help him investigate what had happened to his father, Ji Yichuan, and his mother, Yuchi Snow, after they had been reincarnated. However, after he made the request Ning had gone off to battle the Youngflame clan, then been driven into the Nihilum Zone. Thus, King Yan had never had a chance to tell Ning about what he had discovered.

"I've found the information." King Yan nodded.

"Wonderful! This is...this is wonderful!" Ning couldn't disguise his excitement.

In Ning's heart...his father, Ji Yichuan, and his mother, Yuchi Snow, had the most important position of all. Not even his Dao-companion, Yu Wei, was as important to him as his parents! In fact, in Ning's heart, even his parents from his previous life on Earth were slightly inferior in status when compared to Ji Yichuan and Yuchi Snow. In his past life on Earth, his father had always been busy with his careers, after all; Ning was rarely able to see him. His mother, on the other hand, had always worked very hard to take care of him, and Ning had firmly engraved those memories into his heart.

But in this life...

For the sake of giving birth to him, his mother had been willing to sacrifice her own life-force. For the sake of letting him grow up safely, she hadn't even been willing to tell Ning about their feud with Snowdragon Mountain, or the truth regarding the enemy that had destroyed the Yuchi clan.

Although his father looked cold on the outside, the amount of care and love he had felt for Ji Ning was definitely every bit as much as Yuchi Snow had felt. He had personally taught Ning to use the sword, and had always worked to protect him. In fact, it wasn't until he was no longer capable of protecting Ning that he had perished to

go reunite with Yuchi Snow.

Ning could never forget them!

Those youthful days...those had been the happiest days of his life.

"These are bamboo scrolls." King Yan produced a pair of bamboo scrolls within his hands. "In the Netherworld, we record the information about the dead in them. All who are judged by the Judges of the Dead will have records regarding them. This bamboo scroll has a great deal of information, including information regarding your mother, Yuchi Snow. This one, in turn, has information regarding your father, Ji Yichuan."

Ning took a deep breath before accepting the scrolls.

Ning sent his divine sense into the first scroll. Instantly, an enormous amount of information filled his mind. After Ning had strengthened his heartforce, his control over his divine sense had strengthened noticeably as well. Soon, he was able to sort through the sea of information to find the relevant parts regarding his father, Ji Yichuan.

"Ji Yichuan, of the world of the Grand Xia, Stillwater Commandery, Swallow Mountain. Zifu Disciple. No karmic sin, no karmic merits. Adjudicated to be reborn as a human and be reincarnated in the Wusky world, Flowermont Commandery, Willowriver clan. His name shall be Willowriver Chuan, and he shall live for 182 years."

Ning was no longer a wide-eyed youth; at Mount Innerheart, he had read some books which had given a basic introduction to the Three Realms. He understood what this Judge's intentions were. Generally speaking, decisions on where one would be sent to, what one would be named, and how long one would live for would be automatically made by the Dao of the Heavens. The Judges of the Dead had to intentionally intervene in order to change things. This sort of intervention would usually have a minor impact on one's karmic merits, and so generally speaking only someone who had a sufficient

degree of status was capable of causing the likes of the Ten Yama-Kings of Hell or the First Judge of the Dead to command their subordinates to make a change to one's fate.

Long ago, Judge Cui had told Ning that changing one's lifespan was quite a simple task for him.

But in truth, the 'lifespan' was only applicable to mortals. Once one became an Immortal cultivator, one would've embarked on a path that went against the will of the Heavens. The Heavens would send down the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations, and it would become very difficult to predict how far one would make it down this path. If one remained a mere mortal, one might only live for a century or so, but if one became an Immortal cultivator and became a Zifu Disciple within twenty or so years...it was possible that one might be killed soon after becoming a Zifu Disciple, resulting in a lifespan that was even shorter than that of an ordinary mortal's!

The decisions of the Judges of the Netherworld with regard to one's lifespan were only meaningful for mortals.

"The Wusky world? Flowermont Commandery, Willowriver clan... Willowriver Chuan?" Ning quietly memorized this name.

He immediately picked up the other bamboo scroll, sweeping it with his divine sense.

A short while later, he found the information regarding his mother, Yuchi Snow.

"Yuchi Snow, of the world of the Grand Xia, Eastisle Commandery, Yuchi clan. Slightly positive karma. Adjudicated to be reborn as a human and be reincarnated to the Wusky world, Flowermont Commandery, Eastflow clan. Her name shall be Eastflow Snow, and she shall live for 200 years."

Ning was delighted by what he just saw.

They had both been sent to the Flowermont Commandery of the

Wusky world?

The nearby King Yan said, "The adjudications of the Judges are usually generated naturally in accordance with the Dao of the Heavens. Clearly, your mother and your father have been tied together by karmic love across many lifetimes, and so the Dao of the Heavens invisibly worked to place them together once more."

"Karmic love across many lifetimes?" Ning nodded gently, then immediately said, "King Yan, senior, are you saying that my parents are together once more?"

"I went and helped you investigate what happened after they were reincarnated. I made a trip all the way to the Flowermont Commandery of the Wusky world to look into this matter, but...your parents have already died. The information I found is within this book." King Yan gave Ning a glance, then a book appeared within his hands that he offered to Ning.

Ning was stunned. "Already dead? That means they should be reincarnated again. Why haven't they..." But then, Ning suddenly thought of a possibility. His face turned ashen, and he immediately accepted the book and swept it with his divine sense.

"No."

"No..."

Ning clenched at the book, shaking his head, his eyes filled with shock, anger, and agony. He didn't want to accept this result.

His parents had indeed been linked by karmic love; although they had experienced some problems in their new life, they had still ended up together. Together, they had embarked upon the path of Immortal cultivation...

"How could...how could this have happened?" Ning shook his head, mumbling as he did, "Why did these things have to happen to them? Why didn't they happen to me instead? Although they embarked on

the Immortal path once more, they were just minor figures. Why did things have to end so bitterly for them...why..."

"I don't believe it...I don't believe it!"

"This is all a lie. All a lie!"

Ning's eyes began to turn crazed. The truth was beyond what his mind could accept; he instinctually refused to believe this, especially when this was nothing more than information record in a book!

"Little brother!"

"Junior apprentice-brother!" Yu Wwei and Princess Xiyue were both worried.

Ning immediately said, "I'm going to go to the miniature Netherworld Kingdom. I'm going right now! Senior apprentice-sister...although Stillwater City is in a dangerous situation right now, I have to go right away. If it really does encounter a crisis, shatter this talisman and I'll immediately come back through Greater Teleportation."

"Alright." Yu Wei immediately nodded. "Let me go with you." She could sense how frantic Ning was feeling right now.

"No need. I'll go alone." Ning turned to look at the nearby King Yan. "King Yan, senior, I'm going to go to the miniature Netherworld Kingdom. I need a temporal inversion to see the scene of the Judge adjudicating my parents' fates."

Right now, Ning even doubted the information he had seen within the bamboo scrolls regarding the adjudication of his parents. He had to personally see a temporal inversion, personally see the Judge adjudicate his parents, before he would believe it.

"Alright." King Yan nodded. He still remembered the Xia Emperor's instructions to him. The Xia Emperor viewed quite a few people with favor and wanted to befriend them, but the most important amongst them was this Ji Ning, even though he hadn't even undergone his

tribulation. King Yan naturally wouldn't refuse Ji Ning's requests.

"Let's go." Ning didn't want to wait at all.

"Let me lead the way." King Yan immediately led Ning out, flying away from the estate, then undergoing a spatial teleport in midair. Both men immediately vanished.

Yuchi Xiyue and Yu Wei raised their heads, watching as Ning and King Yan left.

"My grandpa actually didn't tell me any of this..." Xiyue had a somewhat frantic look on her face as well.

"I hope everything is fine," Yu Wei said softly.

.....

A gloomy, deathly aura pervaded this place.

This was an extremely large world. Within it, lines of white-robed figures could be seen walking forward, stretching forth as far as the eye could see. Next to them were many minotaur demon soldiers and other demon soldiers who were striking them with lashes.

Some of the white-robed figures glanced curiously out of the corner of their eyes, paying attention to the two figures who had just appeared in the sky.

The two figures that had appeared were Ji Ning and King Yan.

"This miniature Netherworld isn't that different from the real Netherworld Kingdom, to be honest. There are plenty of deceased spirits here as well," King Yan said. Daofather Crimsonbright controlled dozens of major worlds, after all, as well as countless minor worlds, all of which came under this miniature Netherworld's jurisdiction. It made up for roughly 1% of the entire territory of the Three Realms.

Ning didn't say a word. He wasn't in the mood for chit-chat.

King Yan, after saying a few more things, realized Ning wasn't in the mood. He led Ning directly to a giant city, within which were numerous buildings and many demonic soldiers. King Yan quickly arrived at a courtyard.

"This is the courtyard where your mother was sentenced." King Yan led Ning straight inside.

The demonic soldiers didn't dare restrict them from entering.

The judge on his judge's seat, upon seeing who had entered, was badly shocked. He was just one of countless judges; there was no way he could possibly compare with one of the exalted Yama-Kings.

"Your underling greets you, Yama-King." The judge hurriedly fell to his knees, and the surrounding demonic soldiers all knelt down as well. As for the ghost who was waiting to be sentenced, he was completely terrified.

"Hurry up and sentence this one," King Yan instructed.

"Yes, yes!" The judge hurriedly said, "Hurry up and send him to the eighteenth level of Hell."

Two demonic soldiers immediately dragged the ghost away. The ghost screamed in terror, but was still pulled out of the palace.

"You can leave now. Don't use this court for anything else today," King Yan instructed.

"Yes." Neither the judges nor the demonic soldiers dared say a thing. Although they had many tasks to accomplish, there were many other courts in operation; for one to be paused for a day didn't mean anything. They gave the youth behind King Yan a curious glance; they could sense that even King Yan wanted to ensure that this youth was taken care of.

This youth most likely had an incredible background! They all obediently retreated.

Soon, only Ning and King Yan were left in the court.

"King Yan, senior, I haven't overcome my tribulation to become a Celestial Immortal yet. I'll have to trouble you, senior, to use temporal inversion for me," Ning said.

"A minor matter," King Yan said. Although this sort of Immortal technique used up a considerable amount of his energy, in the long run it didn't matter.

King Yan immediately used the temporal inversion technique.

Whooosh.

The scene before them changed. The departed judges and demonic soldiers quickly returned to the hall, once more beginning to judge the souls of the dead, then the souls before them...

Time continued to flow backwards, faster and faster. In fact, everything turned into a blur. Ning and King Yan just stood there within the court, waiting silently.

The images of the temporal inversion were illusory ones. Even if the figures of the judges or demonic soldiers touched with them, it wouldn't make any difference at all.

One year. Two years. Three years...

Time continued to flow backwards at high speed.

"This is the day," King Yan said.

There had been an order to the procession of souls judged that had been recorded within the bamboo scroll. It included information on which judge did the adjudication, when the record was made, and in what order the decision was made. Thus, King Yan knew exactly

which court and roughly which day the judgement was made.

The reversed flow of time began to slow down, and the ghosts could be seen clearly once more.

Ning looked carefully at the ghosts; one of them should've been his mother.

Suddenly...

King Yan controlled the temporal version, making it come to a sudden halt, because a white-robed woman had just been escorted in by the demonic soldiers...and it was Ning's mother, Yuchi Snow!

"Mother." Ning's eyes stung. He actually wanted to throw himself forward to hug her.

It had been far, far too long...

But Ning knew that these were merely the illusions rendered by a temporal inversion; these were events that had already happened in the past. These were nothing more than illusions; there was no way he could possibly touch his mother.

"Faster, faster!" The two demonic soldiers that brought Yuchi Snow in actually gave her a shove.

Yuchi Snow looked at her surroundings. Not panicking at all, she immediately knelt down. "My respects to you, judge."

Chapter 4 – Eastflow Snow, Willowriver Chuan

An aura of light suddenly appeared within the court, and within the light appeared many images. There were images of a little girl playing with her elders, of a young maiden fleeing in terror, of the fully grown Yuchi Snow staring into Ji Yichuan's eyes, of her adventures in the Darknorth Sea, of her birth of Ji Ning, of her teaching Ji Ning footwork techniques...

One image after another.

"Her past life." Ning stared at the images.

Although a Protocosmic spirit-treasure had been left behind within this miniature cycle of reincarnation that allowed one to view the past lives of countless ghosts, there was no Book of Life and Death. The judge merely gave the images a glance, then wrote with his pen, "Yuchi Snow, of the world of the Grand Xia, Eastisle Commandery, Yuchi clan. Slightly positive karma. Adjudicated to be..." Some thoughts suddenly appeared in the judge's mind.

Adjudicated to be reborn as a human and be reincarnated to the Wusky world, Flowermont Commandery, Eastflow clan. Her name shall be Eastflow Snow, and she shall live for 200 years.

These thoughts had been naturally generated by the Dao of the Heavens.

Once one took on the position of judge and moved to support the normal functioning of the Six Paths, it could be said that one had become a part of the Dao of the Heavens. However, the judges were fully capable of changing these written decisions...but in doing so, their own karma would be affected. The more ridiculous the changes were, the more major the impact would be on their karmic standing. In fact, there were some judgements that simply couldn't be written. For example, if this minor judge was to try to forcibly write that Yuchi Snow's sentence was to suffer a thousand years of punishment in

the eighteenth level of Hell, so much sin would accumulate around the judge that he would probably be immediately deposed from his position, even before he finished writing the sentence!

"...To be reborn as a human and be reincarnated to the Wusky world, Flowermont Commandery, Eastflow clan. Her name shall be Eastflow Snow, and she shall live for 200 years!" This judge naturally followed the will of the Dao of the Heavens. He wouldn't make any changes at all for an ordinary ghost like this.

.....

Watching as his mother was sent off, Ning murmured to himself, "It really was the Eastflow clan of the Flowermont Commandery of the Wusky world. I wasn't lied to."

"Do you wish to also see Ji Yichuan?" The nearby King Yan asked.

"Yes. Of course, yes." Ning nodded, then said, "King Yan, sorry for the trouble."

"No trouble at all. If I ran into something like this, I'd probably be frantic as well. Still...unless one becomes a Celestial Immortal, one shall forever struggle within the cycle of the Six Paths of Reincarnation. If one is lucky, one might eventually escape, but less than one in a trillion actually do so. The vast majority shall continue to drown within the cycle until the day comes when their soul is destroyed." King Yan looked at Ning. "You need to accept this."

Ning nodded gently.

"Come. Let's go to another court," King Yan said, leading the way.

.....

Yet another court. The court had been a ceaseless bustle of activity, but it all came to a sudden halt. The judge and the demonic soldiers were terrified into hurriedly departing, leaving behind only Ning and King Yan. King Yan once more used a temporal inversion technique,

allowing them to view the scenes of the past. They watched as Ji Yichuan was sentenced by the judge.

"Father." Ning looked at the white-robed Ji Yichuan while listening to the words of the judge. "So he really was sent to the Flowermont Commandery of the Wusky world."

"I wish to make a trip to the Wusky world," Ning said.

"Alright. I'll accompany you on this trip. I imagine that you will want the temporal inversion technique to be used again; I'll have to do it for you." King Yan nodded, then advised, "But Ji Ning, you have to be careful. The Wusky world is not like the Grand Xia; its foundations are not as stable or deep as ours. Thus, the Seamless Gate has been even more brazen in that world. We can go investigate matters pertaining to your parents' reincarnation, but it's best for you not to intervene in those struggles."

Ning said softly, "I understand. King Yan, don't worry; I'm no longer that stupid, hot-headed little kid."

"Mm." King Yan nodded.

The two immediately left this courtyard, then used a spatial teleport to head straight to the Wusky world.

The Wusky world was one of the dozens of major worlds under Daofather Crimsonbright's control. In truth, of the worlds under Daofather Crimsonbright, the Grand Xia was actually in fairly good shape; there were many that were in far worse shape than the Grand Xia! For example, the Mount Stele major world was now almost completely controlled by the Seamless Gate.

The Wusky world had descended into the fires of war, filled with battles by Immortals and Fiends.

"This is where the Eastflow clan of the Flowermont Commandery is located." King Yan looked down from the night sky towards a city, filled with countless Diremonsters.

"The Eastflow clan is gone?" Ning frowned.

"Perhaps a few remnants of them remain somewhere." King Yan looked downwards. "Right now, the entire Wusky world is in a state of chaos. Major clans and sects might be able to fight back, but many smaller, backwater areas have been utterly massacred. The Seamless Gate doesn't care too much about discipline; in fact, they delight in causing chaos, the more the merrier."

Ning nodded.

He had noticed this as well.

When humans took control over a territory, they emphasized order.

But the Seamless Gate, however, encouraged battle and war. It instigated countless problems, hoping for more chaos!

"This city of the Eastflow clan was broken into by monsters. It is now occupied by monsters, while the remnants of the Eastflow clan have fled long ago," King Yan said. "Let me use the temporal inversion now."

"Alright." Ning nodded.

Ning gave the city below a single glance. Instantly, invisible ripples of power swept out from his soul.

All of the many monsters within the commandery city, as well as a few humans who were still resisting and fight back against the monsters, all felt their bodies go soft before they collapsed to the ground. In this instant...all the humans and monsters within the city were trapped within a deep slumber.

"Temporal inversion." King Yan looked downwards as he executed his technique.

.....

"Waaaaaa!"

A cry rang out, and an infant was born.

"Haha, let's call this daughter of mine...Eastflow Snow." A tall man spoke out in a joyful manner.

Eastflow Snow slowly grew up. She was smart and obedient, learning from her father to become a Ki Refiner and loving to play around with the other children of the same age...

Ning just quietly watched.

"So similar. She looks so similar to mother," Ning murmured silently to himself. In this life, Eastflow Snow lived a joyful, carefree life. She was filled with vigor and life, whereas in her past life as Yuchi Snow, she had always seemed slightly gloomy and quiet.

Eastflow Snow quickly grew up. After turning sixteen, she went out adventuring with her fellow clansmen.

While adventuring in the outside world...

She encountered another boy, a boy who saved her.

"Who are you?"

"My name is Willowriver Chuan."

The sixteen year old Eastflow Snow had met with the still-boyish Willowriver Chuan.

"Mother. Father..." Ning and King Yan quietly watched.

The two went out adventuring together. Willowriver Chuan slowly grew taller; although he was a few years younger than Snow, he had a tall, muscular frame. Given that Chuan was also a Fiendgod Body Refiner, he soon grew even taller than Snow. After adventuring together for two years, the two naturally began to grow close together, perhaps because they felt an innate affinity for each other.

Chuan and Snow both broke through to become Xiantian lifeforms while adventuring together! However, Chuan broke through as both a Fiendgod Body Refiner and a Ki Refiner, whereas Snow was merely a Ki Refiner.

"Little brother Chuan, Father has already sent people to summon me; I have to go back."

"Big sister Snow, I'll find you. I'll make your father allow you to marry me."

"I'll wait for you."

"I'll definitely come."

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"Hahaha, dear Snow, you have quite the eye. This Willowriver Chuan was able to become a Xiantian lifeform; this means that he can be considered a genius of the Willowriver clan. However...their clan is still a small one. It can't compare with our Eastflow clan."

"Daddy!" Snow grew worried.

"Ahaha, I'm just teasing you! If you like him, then go ahead and be with him; I won't stop you."

.....

Months later.

"Chuan, don't be in such a rush. Father has actually agreed to us already; he's just testing you." Snow had stealthily crept over to the guest building where Chuan was residing to tell him this.

"So that's the case. I was being too impatient." Chuan rubbed his head. "Big sister Snow, since your father isn't going to stop us...then I'm going to go back to prepare a betrothal gift. According to clan rules, I need to prepare a gift of nine ding-cauldrons."

"Alright." Snow nodded gently, but she blushed a bit with shyness.

.....

A betrothal gift of nine ding-cauldrons was quite a pricey one. However...since Chuan had long ago broken through to the Xiantian level, his status within his clan was quite high. He soon prepared the gift. Although the Eastflow clan was far more powerful, they didn't move to stop this affair. The two sides soon came to agree on an auspicious day; next spring, the wedding would occur.

Within the Eastflow clan.

"Adept Icebreak, after these three kids join the Flowermont Immortal School, I'll have to trouble you to take care of them. Here are our gifts for you for taking them on as your disciples; please accept them, Adept."

"Teaching and guiding one's disciples is only normal; there's no need for this gift. I've spent quite some time with your Eastflow clan; it's time for me to go back. Have those three kids come out; I'll take them back to the Flowermont Immortal School."

"Yes, Adept."

The Eastflow clan leader was being very careful to take good care of this Adept Icebreak of the Flowermont Immortal School. The Flowermont Immortal School was the most supreme of the large schools of the Flowermont Commandery. Supposedly, they even had a Celestial Immortal amongst their ranks! In addition, the Flowermont Immortal School was very strict with its disciples; in fact, if any disciples had any sin around them, they would be expelled! From this, one could tell how strict their rules were.

There were naturally many people who wished to join such a mighty, righteous school.

"The Adept forgot this. Please hand this to the Adept." The Eastflow clan leader secretly handed the gift to one of the Adept's followers,

who accepted it.

Soon, three youths appeared.

"After you go to the Immortal School, you'll have to work hard."

"You are the shining stars amongst the younger generation of our Eastflow clan. In the future, our clan will depend on you."

"Little uncle, remember to come back to visit me."

"Second brother, take care of yourself."

The kinsmen of the three youths sent them off...and amongst them was Eastflow Snow.

The distant Adept Icebreak glanced over, his gaze suddenly falling upon Eastflow Snow. He immediately sent mentally, "Eastflow clan leader."

"Adept," the Eastflow clan leader hurriedly said.

"That white-robed girl looks nice." Adept Icebreak sent mentally, "I am in need of a maid servant, and she looks quite obedient and clever; she's a good fit. Help me speak to her; if she is willing to accompany me, then send her to me. But if she is not willing, then forget it."

Adept Icebreak then led these three early-stage Zifu Disciple youths into his flying ship, then departed from the Eastflow clan.

The Eastflow clan leader hesitated a moment, then spoke to Snow's father about this.

"Clan leader, you are going to give Snow to Adept Icebreak? We can't do that; in another month, she's going to get married. Can't you refuse?"

"How can I refuse? Don't you know what sort of a person this Adept Icebreak is? Although he looks like an upright gentleman, in secret

he's very greedy and very lecherous! It's precisely because he is greedy that our Eastflow clan was able to send three of our own into the Flowermont Immortal School. If we don't give him Snow...he'll probably be embarrassed and angered, which will have a negative impact on Fuqiang and the others. They are the future of our Eastflow clan; for the sake of the clan, if we have to sacrifice a little girl like Snow, then we will do it!"

"But the Willowriver clan...?"

"The Willowriver clan merely has two Zifu Disciples; how would a clan like that dare to offend our Eastflow clan? Ignore them. For the sake of the tribe, even I myself can be sacrificed, much less Snow! I'm just letting you know in advance; later, I'll go speak to Snow myself. I trust that she knows what truly matters. In addition...from this day forth, you are not to meet with Snow any longer. I'll handle everything myself, to ensure that there are no slip-ups."

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"Clan leader, you...you are telling me...no...no! I want to see Father, I want to see Father!"

"You should know what truly matters. Come, men, go and lock her up! Tomorrow, I'll send her off myself."

.....

Within a vast wilderness.

"Big sister Snow, why did you break the message-talisman? What has happened?"

"I used a Lesser Teleportation Dao-seal to flee. There's no time! I want you to give up everything and leave this place by my side. In fact, we're going to leave the entire Flowermont Commandery, but we will be together. Alright?"

Romantic love and familial love warred with each other. In the end...

Willowriver Chuan had knelt down, kowtowing towards the direction of his clan. "Father. Mother. Elder brother and second brother will have to be filial in my stead. Forgive me for being unfilial! In the future, if I have the chance, I will return."

"Let's go."

That very night, Willowriver Chuan and Eastflow Snow had left their homeland, eloping.

Chapter 5 – Truesoul

Ji Ning stood there in the wilderness, watching the scene of Willowriver Chuan and Eastflow Snow fleeing that had been created by the temporal inversion. His heart felt heavy...because up until now, everything which had transpired was identical to events as portrayed within the book King Yan had given him.

"Let's go to the Ninesongs Sword Sect," Ning said.

"Alright."

King Yan knew that until Ning saw everything in person, he wouldn't give up hope. The two immediately teleported forward to the Ninesongs Sword Sect, located in another commandery.

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That year, Chuan and Snow had carefully, slowly departed in a drifting manner. They spent a total of eight years before passing out of the vast Flowermont Commandery and arriving at the Ninesongs Sword Sect. Chuan was very skilled in the sword to begin with, and because they had encountered many dangers over the past eight years, he had improved significantly. His had reached the Zifu Disciple level as a Fiendgod Body refiner, and so he was able to easily enter the Ninesongs Sword Sect as a disciple. As for Eastflow Snow, she had entered by his side as his 'maidservant'.

The second year after their entry into the Ninesongs Sword Sect. Snow, by relying on a spirit-pill which Chuan had acquired from the sect, was able to break through to the Zifu Disciple level. She, too, was accepted as formal disciple of the Ninesongs Sword Sect.

"This is the place where the Ninesongs Sword Sect used to be." From his position high up in the air, King Yan pointed downwards towards a giant pile of rubble.

Ning stared at the rubble, his heart sinking.

The rubble spanned tens of thousands of kilometers, and there were quite a few monsters in this area.

"Eastflow Snow...Willowriver Chuan. According to the intelligence reports that I collected, they lived here at Waterflow Peak, which should be right over there." King Yan quickly flew to a part of the destroyed city. Waving his hand, he caused the many monsters and Diremonsters there to all collapse.

"Temporal inversion." King Yan once more caused a temporal inversion.

The scene here quickly began to reverse. Several decades of time were reversed.

The scenery here was now incomparably beautiful. There were beautiful mountains and rivers. There was dense spiritual energy here, and Immortal cultivators could be seen everywhere.

"Chuan, you always let me win." Snow and Chuan were competing in swordplay, but in the end, Chuan always 'lost' every match.

"No, it's that your sword-arts have improved yet again, Snow," Chuan said with a laugh.

Seeing this, Ning felt a warm feeling in his heart.

"There are three more years before that calamity," the nearby King Yan told Ning. He controlled the flow of time, speeding it up. Snow and Chuan lived happy lives here at the Ninesongs Sword Sect; they had just joined the school, after all, and it wasn't yet time for them to go out and adventure. Their life here was like life in paradise.

Soon...three years of time passed within the temporal inversion.

This was a bright, sunny day. The scenery was as beautiful as ever. In truth, the Seamless Gate had already infiltrated the Wusky world several years ago, and the outside world was in a state of chaos. Life within the Ninesongs Sword Sect, however, remained as peaceful

and calm as ever.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Black sword-light suddenly began to flash.

Willowriver Chuan, wielding twin swords, was currently training in swordplay while comprehending the Dao. Because he was a Fiendgod Body Refiner, he now looked even more handsome and valiant than he had in his past life.

The nearby Eastflow Snow was seated close to him, smiling as she watched. She knew that in her heart, her man continued to long for his homeland, long for his Willowriver clan. However...he had always been worried about Adept Icebreak of the Flowermont Immortal School, and so he continued to wait and endure. He was extremely hard on himself in training sword-arts, becoming one of the best amongst the Zifu Disciples of the Ninesongs Sword Sect. He had long ago reached the level of seeing a hint into the 'true meaning of the Dao'.

"Chuan, we'll definitely be able to go back together." Eastflow Snow missed her father as well.

Suddenly...

A group of black-robed figures appeared in the sky. There were a total of twenty-seven of them, and they almost instantly transformed into three giant black serpents. These three giant black serpents were more than a thousand kilometers long. Their auras filled the skies, and the entire grand formation that protected the Ninesongs Sword Sect was instantly activated, causing light to flare everywhere.

Rumble...

The world seemed to have collapsed. The formation was only able to stay alive for a few moments, and then it crumbled.

"What's going on?"

"What happened?"

Many of the weaker, ordinary disciples were completely stunned.

Chuan, however, instantly flew to Snow's side. He hurriedly said, "Snow, let's..."

Halfway through their words, a ripple of energy swept past this entire mountain. Some the Zifu Disciples who were struck head-on by the ripple were instantly reduced to dust, completely unable to fight back. And then, with a booming sound, the entire mountain peak began to collapse. Countless rocks began to fall down, and both Chuan and Snow hurriedly flew away in an attempt to hide.

"Seamless Gate, our Ninesongs Sword Sect has never offended you. Why do you have to annihilate our school?" Several figures had streaked into the skies; it was the Loose Immortals, Earth Immortals, and Primal Daoists of the Ninesongs Sword Sect. They formed together into a grand formation, each of them furious and frantic.

"Just die in peace!"

One of the three massive black serpents spoke out in the human tongue...and then, not bothering to say anything else, they began to fight brashly.

The surrounding space had been completely locked; there was no way to teleport out of it.

"Kill."

"Kill!"

Unable to escape, the Loose Immortals and Earth Immortals of the Ninesongs Sword Sect led the Primal Daoists to join into a formation. They transformed into a dazzling, titanic sword that did battle against those three giant serpents. However, after clashing just a few times, the titanic sword was completely shattered. More than half of the Loose Immortals, Earth Immortals, and Primal Daoists of the

Ninesongs Sword Sect were instantly killed, while the others were all heavily wounded.

"No..."

"Damn!"

The heavily injured Ninesongs Sword Sect experts were all wiped out. The giant black serpents swam about in the skies, utterly destroying the base of the sect, which stretched out more than tens of thousands of kilometers. As for the weaker disciples of the Ninesongs Sword Sect, they were unable to escape and so many of them were butchered without being able to fight back at all.

"Snow..." Willowriver Chuan held Eastflow Snow in his arms, no longer running.

"Chuan...do you regret having left with me?" Tears fell down Eastflow Snow's face.

"These past twelve years...I've truly been very happy. If I had the chance to choose again, I would still choose to come here with you, Snow." Chuan laughed. "We'll meet again on the road to the Yellow Springs."

"Right." Tears falling down her face, Snow nodded.

Rumble...

A ripple swept out, and the embracing couple of Willowriver Chuan and Eastflow Snow was reduced to dust. Their souls, however, were drawn upwards at high speed by some invisible force. In midair, there was a black gourd that was frantically drawing in all the nearby souls of the slaughtered, including the souls of Chuan and Snow.

Ning just stood there, watching silently.

The nearby King Yan said softly, "The Seamless Gate wanted to tame

this commandery, but since they had just arrived, not many joined them. Thus, the Seamless Gate decided to annihilate some smaller schools, so as to frighten the others. While killing countless cultivators, they collected the souls of the slain for usage in forming some evil techniques. If one had millions, ideally hundreds of millions of cultivator souls, one could refine a truly powerful and truly terrifying evil magic treasure, or develop a truly vile divine ability."

Ning knew this quite well, of course.

"What a pity." King Yan sighed. "The Seamless Gate is spread throughout the Three Realms, and the power behind them is unfathomably mighty. Even though you have a Daofather as your master...you still probably won't be able to do anything to them."

"I'm very calm right now," Ning said softly.

Although he looked calm...in truth, Ning felt an overpowering desire to kill, one greater than he had ever felt. It was only because he had reached the third level of heartforce, 'ruler', that Ning was able to remain calm. However...in his heart, Ning now viewed the Seamless Gate as his most hated of foes. Even the hatred he felt for the Youngflame clan was less than a hundredth of a hundredth of the hatred he felt for the Seamless Gate!

"The. Seamless. Gate." Ning spoke out three words, enunciating each one.

The nearby King Yan suddenly felt his heart shudder for no reason. He could vaguely sense the killing intent within Ning's heart...and all he could do was sigh. The Seamless Gate...it was a power that had swept through the entire Three Realms. How could it be so easily dealt with?

"Don't act foolishly," King Yan said.

Ning murmured softly to himself, "Even though Father and Mother's

souls have been shattered...in the future, I'm going to train until I become a True God or a Daofather. I'll find their truesouls in the River of Destiny and bring them back to life."

King Yan didn't say anything.

Both of them knew that the true essence of all living creatures came from their truesoul. Even if one's soul was shattered, their truesouls would return to the mysterious River of Destiny...but it was far too hard to find a truesoul within it. According to the legends, only Mother Nuwa, who had reached Pangu's level of power, was capable of this. However...if one became a True God or Daofather then located Mother Nuwa, they could ask Mother Nuwa to intervene.

"I wish to make a trip to the Flowermont Immortal School," Ning said calmly. "I want to pay a visit to that Adept Icebreak."

"I'll go with you. I've already collected a report regarding this 'Icebreak,'" King Yan said. "He is now a Primal Daoist. Because the Flowermont Immortal School has a Celestial Immortal protecting it, it still exists. That Celestial Immortal is under Daofather Crimsonbright's command, and it can be said that the two of us are on friendly terms. All we have to do is seek out Patriarch Flowermont; he won't care about the life of a puny little Primal Daoist. Patriarch Flowermont can be said to be quite a noble man, righteous and unyielding, which is why the rules of his school are so strict. However, no matter how strict the rules are, it's hard to avoid a few pests from invading."

"I understand. I won't fight with Patriarch Flowermont." Ning nodded.

For every grievance, there is someone responsible for it; for every debt, there is a debtor.

Ning understood this principle. The reason why King Yan had said those words was because he was worried that Ning was going to go fight with the entire Flowermont Immortal School. It must be understood that Ning had once fought all of the Celestial Immortals

of the Youngflame clan by himself, eventually killing two of them. Given his power...there was no way the Flowermont Immortal School would be able to resist him.

.....

The Flowermont Immortal School.

This was the number one school of the Flowermont Commandery of the Wusky world. The founding patriarch was Patriarch Flowermont, who remained alive to this very day. It was due to him that the fame of the Flowermont Immortal School was spread far and wide.

"Master."

"Master."

"Master."

A series of maids called out respectfully as the confident, extraordinarily handsome Adept Icebreak walked past them with a smile. Everyone within the Flowermont Immortal School knew that Daoist Icebreak was a gentleman; his only flaw was that he loved beauties! However, he neither stole them nor seized them from others. For a person to have many maids by his side wasn't too major a flaw.

"Autumn Water, you and the rest of the seven, attend me," Daoist Icebreak said.

"Yes."

Seven of the maids immediately assented respectfully. Their hearts, however, were filled with terror and unease. Outsiders were ignorant of this, but they knew exactly how savage and cruel Daoist Icebreak was. Some of the maids that he tortured and ravaged actually died from it! However, Daoist Icebreak would often send the older maids who were no longer beautiful back to their own clans and arrange for them to live good lives. This caused many of the

disciples of the Flowermont Immortal School to praise Adept Icebreak for being a passionate, kind man.

Boom! A figure suddenly descended from the skies.

Daoist Icebreak frowned. Who dared to trespass within his territory? But then...

"Headmaster!" Daoist Icebreak was badly shocked. He hurriedly fell to his knees with respect.

"Follow me." The Headmaster of the Flowermont Immortal School had a cold look on his face. He grabbed Daoist Icebreak, then dragged him into the skies.

Daoist Icebreak was utterly terrified on the way over...because the Headmaster was actually dragging him to the legendary residence of the Patriarch. Patriarch Flowermont was the founding patriarch of the school, a Celestial Immortal! Daoist Icebreak had never even seen him a single time. Why did the Patriarch wish to see him? He had never offended the Patriarch...could it be that he had just been singled out for his talent and was about to be made a personal disciple of the Patriarch?

Upon arriving, Daoist Icebreak saw a yellow-robed man on his knees, quivering.

"Father!" Daoist Icebreak was shocked to see his father, an Earth Immortal. He had always relied on his father to support him within the sect.

"Why haven't you knelt yet?!" The yellow-robed man roared.

Adept Icebreak sank to his knees with a thud.

Moments later, the courtyard door in front of them creaked open, and three figures emerged.

"My two fellow Daoists..." A black-bearded man spoke with

incomparable warmth.

Only now did the kneeling Daoist Icebreak give these three a glance. Although he had never seen the Patriarch before, there were portraits of the Patriarch within the school, and so he recognized right away that this black-bearded elder was Patriarch Flowermont. However...right now, even their founding Patriarch was treating these two guests with incomparable respect.

"Who are those two? Why is the Patriarch behaving so humbly and modestly towards them?" Daoist Icebreak couldn't understand it.

Patriarch Flowermont, however, just gave the kneeling Daoist Icebreak a sideways glance. A cold look flashed through his eyes; that damned Daoist Icebreak had actually offended Ji Ning! The Wusky major world was one of Daofather Crimsonbright's worlds, which meant Patriarch Flowermont was one of Daofather Crimsonbright's Celestial Immortals. Word had long since spread amongst this group of Celestial Immortals that Ji Ning, all by himself, had fought against nine Celestial Immortals of the Youngflame clan, with one of them being Immortal Venomfreak. In the end, Ji Ning had managed to kill two of them, but he had been exiled after a plot caused him to be burned by karmic sinflames.

This news had instantly swept the various worlds, causing the many Celestial Immortals and True Immortals under Daofather Crimsonbright's command to all feel admiration for Ji Ning.

He had trained for less than a century, and he was a Void-level in power...but he had fought against nine Celestial Immortals and killed two of them?!

"He even managed to come back after being exiled into a danger zone while being surrounded by karmic sinflames. A monster like this...his personal power is far greater than mine, while his background and his potential is even more astonishing." Patriarch Flowermont naturally was enraged that Daoist Icebreak had caused his school to become enemies with this man.

"Fellow Daoist Ji Ning, I truly feel ashamed that my school has given birth to such a vile miscreant! I've already summoned Daoist Icebreak. You choose what to do with him! Whether it is to simply kill him or to torture his soul for millions of years...fellow Daoist Ji Ning, do as you please!" Patriarch Flowermont said.

Chapter 6 – The Curtains Are Raised

Daoist Icebreak knelt there. He felt as though freezing icewater had just been poured across his entire body. He felt extremely cold, and his face had turned white. Kill him? Torture him? Torment his soul? Daoist Icebreak repeatedly kowtowed, smashing his forehead against the ground until blood began to pour from it. He screamed frantically, "Patriarch, Patriarch! Two seniors! Spare me, spare me! I've definitely never offended this senior, Ji Ning. Someone must have framed me. Framed me!"

Ji Ning just stood there, staring at the terrified, kneeling Daoist Icebreak. He was very calm.

The nearby King Yan, however, did speak out. "If I say you deserve to die, then you deserve to die!"

Daoist Icebreak's heart trembled.

Right.

Even a Celestial Immortal like Patriarch Flowermont was so respectful of these two. If they wanted to kill him...did they even really need to give a good excuse?

The yellow-robed man knelt there by his side. He loved his son, but he didn't dare to say a single word. He knew what sort of terrifying situation they were currently facing.

"Even if I have to die...senior, please tell me what I've done, exactly!" Daoist Icebreak was still frantically trying to find a way to survive. He suppressed his terror as he raised his head to look towards Ning. He had to find out what this was all about. Only when he understood the reason behind this could he explain and argue back. Otherwise, there was no way for him to even argue about it!

"In recent years...you've harmed quite a few mortals, haven't you." Ning's voice was very calm. His eyes were very calm as well.

Daoist Icebreak's body shook. He immediately collapsed supinely to the ground, a look of utter despair on his face.

Mortals?

Even he himself didn't know how many woman had fallen into his hands, then been ravaged to death by him. Forget about mortals; even quite a few female cultivators had fallen into his hands. However...he had never left behind any traces.

"Who...who is this youth, that even the Patriarch must be wary of? Which mortal was he connected to? Little Sparrow? Nuan'er? Dongyou?" One figure after another flashed through Daoist Icebreak's mind. These were images of the woman who had suffered under him that he remembered the most keenly.

"You harmed so many that you can't even guess?" Ning said softly, "Then think it over, slowly, in Purgatory."

A strange ripple suddenly reached Daoist Icebreak's body. Daoist Icebreak's body trembled. A look of despair and terror appeared in his eyes...and he stopped moving. His soul instantly flew out from his body. What Ning had just done was to hypnotize him, then forcibly rip his soul out of his body. A black bottle appeared in Ning's hand which instantly sucked Daoist Icebreak's soul into it. Green flames could vaguely be seen blazing within the bottle.

The kneeling, yellow-robed man stared at the flames in the bottle. His heart instantly shuddered. "Son...your father didn't discipline you well enough." He understood what his son's flaws were, and he often urged his son to do better. Daoist Icebreak was always quite obedient in front of him...but as soon as he turned his head, Icebreak would go back to his old ways. All he did was hide it even better.

In the end, he felt that since his son focused on mortals, it shouldn't make much of a difference, and so he didn't reprimand his son too strongly.

"If one often walks by the riverside, one's shoes will eventually get wet. He did too many evil deeds...one might be able to avoid retribution for a time, but no one can avoid retribution forever." Only now did the yellow-robed man truly understand this saying. The righteous laws of Heaven applied to all men, and the wheel of karma turned without end; both had their own ways of punishing the wicked.

"Fellow Daoist Ji Ning, this Daoist Icebreak has committed countless vile deeds. The only reason why this vile miscreant was able to live so long was because I didn't maintain a firm enough grip over my disciples. Daoist Icebreak's father, 'Yangfish', is right here as well. Without his father's protection, how would this vile miscreant have dared to act so boldly? Fellow Daoist Ji Ning, punish him as you see fit; there's no need to worry about me!" Patriarch Flowermont said.

A mere Void-level Earth Immortal truly meant very little to a Celestial Immortal.

Ning gave the yellow-robed man a glance.

King Yan had collected intelligence reports regarding both Daoist Icebreak and his father, and Ning had read them all. Daoist Icebreak was a hypocrite and a false gentleman who had done many vile deeds in secret, harming many people. His father, however, could be considered a righteous man. He didn't do evil deeds and was quite an admirable person, and was also quite talented, which was why he had become a Void-level Earth Immortal. His only personality flaw was that he doted on his son too much.

"Let's go," Ning said to King Yan, then turned to look at Patriarch Flowermont. "Fellow Daoist Flowermont, we've disturbed you long enough. We'll go back to the Grand Xia now."

"Sure, sure." Patriarch Flowermont smiled. "If you have free time, come and visit our Wusky world again."

King Yan expressed his thanks as well, then he and Ning flew away

on a cloud. They left the Flowermont Immortal School, then used a spatial teleport to leave.

After they left, Patriarch Flowermont's face sank down as he looked at the yellow-robed man. "Yangfish, you failed as a father. Your son nearly caused our school a huge disaster. As the person who shielded him this entire time, you have to be punished. End your own life and go reincarnate."

The yellow-robed man trembled. He didn't dare to argue back; he immediately kowtowed, then his body imploded. Even his goldlotus primal soul dissipated. A wind blew past his body...and it completely dissipated, leaving behind no traces. His soul, escorted by the Dao of the Heavens, was sent to the minor Netherworld right away.

"Patriarch." Only now did the nearby Flowermont Immortal School's leader speak out. "Why did you order Yangfish to die? Didn't senior Ji Ning decide to spare him?"

"The reason why fellow Daoist Ji Ning didn't act against him was because he didn't want to act against someone who wasn't directly responsible." Patriarch Flowermont shook his head. "However...what if Yangfish was to harbor hatred in his heart and, overestimating his abilities, tried to exact revenge in some form against Ji Ning? That would cause an utter disaster for our Flowermont Immortal School. In addition...although fellow Daoist Ji Ning seemed to have left, who knows if he secretly felt hatred for Yangfish or not? If I didn't kill him...fellow Daoist Ji Ning might harbor a grudge! Thus, it is better to kill him....that way, fellow Daoist Ji Ning wouldn't hold a grudge against me."

The Headmaster now understood how carefully the Patriarch was behaving. He immediately asked, "Patriarch, who in the world is this Ji Ning, that you act so carefully around him? I took a careful look at him earlier, but I didn't find any Immortal spirit-qi around him; he shouldn't be a Celestial Immortal."

The Patriarch gave him a glance. "He is not a Celestial Immortal; he is

merely a Void-level Fiendgod. However, he was able to fight against nine mighty Celestial Immortals of the Youngflame clan in the world of the Grand Xia, and he even killed two of them. In addition...he was able to survive even the descent of karmic sinflames! Despite being merely at the Void-level, it wouldn't be hard for him to wipe out our entire Flowermont Immortal School...and he is the disciple of a Daofather!"

"The disciple of a Daofather?!" The Headmaster had been feeling stunned by Ning's power, but upon hearing this, he was truly terrified.

"Now do you understand?" Patriarch Flowermont said calmly, "Be it due to his power, his potential, or his background...I have to be careful around him."

.....

The two had teleported back to the world of the Grand Xia.

The world of the Grand Xia. Stillwater Commandery. The Black-White College. Ji Ning and King Yan both appeared in the skies above the College. They then flew towards Yu Wei's residence.

It was late in the afternoon, almost nightfall.

"Junior apprentice-brother."

"Little brother."

Yu Wei and Yuchi Xiyue were waiting for them in the courtyard.

Ning nodded lightly. He didn't feel the slightest bit of joy for having killed Daoist Icebreak. All he felt in his heart was pain...and an endless amount of hatred towards the Seamless Gate!

"Senior apprentice-sister...prepare some food. I'm going to eat a bit, then take a rest," Ning said. "The Seamless Gate already sent their final diplomatic note; their attacks will come very soon. We need to

make as many preparations as we can."

"Alright." Yu Wei could tell that Ning was in a terrible mood, and so she acceded to his request.

That night, during dinner. Xiyue did her best to bring up interesting topics so as to help improve Ning's mood. Yu Wei did her best to help out as well. Ning forced out a smile, but his smile caused Xiyue and Yu Wei to both sigh inside. "The only thing we can do is wait for time to heal all wounds."

Only later that night did Ning say a few things to Yu Wei, a few words from the bottom of his heart.

"This world is filled with injustices, and I'm unable to address them all. The countless cultivators and mortals of the world are all unable to address them all. The only ones who can change the world...are the likes of my master, and the other major powers who stand at the very top of the universe," Ning said. "Right now, I, Ji Ning, am helpless to change this world...but after I become a True God or a Daofather, I'll have a chance to change things."

"I want to stand at the peak, to change everything. I want to protect you...protect our future children....protect the ones I love." Ning sat there on a dais, Yu Wei in his arms. "I want to stand at the peak!"

"I want to change everything!"

"But first...I have to be strong enough."

Ning raised his head to stare at the crescent moon in the skies.

Yu Wei looked at Ning. She could sense a terrifying determination within this youth's heart.

"The more ambitions you have, the more accomplishments you will have." This was something that she had once heard. It was within a dark region, where countless figures had been prostrating themselves, Yu Wei one of them. The ruler of that black region had

spoken these words.

In this moment, as she lay next to Ning, Yu Wei understood the true meaning of those words that had been spoken by that terrifying figure.

A powerful heart...would have the power to change destiny itself.

"Perhaps...junior apprentice-brother truly will become a True God or a Daofather," Yu Wei said quietly to herself. "By then...will I still be by his side? Will I still be accompanying him?"

.....

In the coming days, Celestial Immortal Unity of Stillwater City, Immortal Diancai, Yu Wei, and Ji Ning all began to make their preparations. They familiarized themselves with the formations protecting Stillwater City. Ning's Primaltwin completely focused on meditating on the Dao, searching for the way to apply heartforce to Immortal swords! Previously, in the Nihilum Zone, Ning had only developed a way to apply heartforce to his sword-fingers.

There were a few differences between using sword-fingers and actual swords. Still...since both involved sword-arts, Ning was able to grasp the essence of it right away. However, he needed some time to reach a perfect level of mastery in it.

Ning felt eager...because once his Primaltwin completely mastered the art of applying heartforce to swords, he would undergo his Celestial Tribulation!

.....

The Fifth World. The enormous, castle-like city, filled with countless towering edifices. The most towering edifice was the one where only Empyrean Gods or True Immortals could enter.

Within an enormous palace.

Scorching flames blazed in the very center of the palace. Surrounding the center, there were three massive thrones, with an azure-robed, white-skinned woman seated in the central throne. To her left sat a fire-robed man, while to her right sat a skinny, monkey-like elder.

"The Mount Stele major world has already been occupied. Only a few scattered pockets of resistance remain." The azure-robed woman's voice had a magnetic, soul-penetrating quality to it. "We can begin to transfer our forces over and truly begin to act against the world of the Grand Xia."

"The power of the world of the Grand Xia...Mount Stele can't begin to compare to it." The skinny elder said in a low voice, "Our Bloodcloud Hall has infiltrated the Grand Xia, and I've even personally investigated it several times. The power of the Grand Xia Dynasty caused even me to feel shocked! Don't forget that behind him stands Daofather Crimsonbright and Daofather Raindragon, as well as the Primordial Imperial Clan!"

"The human Imperial Clan...would they truly initiate a final battle against us for the sake of one of their branches?" The azure-robed woman shook her head. "They will not."

"But the human Imperial Clan of the Primordial Era will send reinforcements," the skinny elder warned. "Although we'll be able to send over our forces from the Mount Stele world and many other places, I keep on having this feeling...that it is going to be dangerous, very dangerous. The world of the Grand Xia...this is probably the most powerful major world under the command of Daofather Crimsonbright."

The azure-robed woman looked at the fire-robed man.

The fire-robed man laughed. "Don't look at me. My Myriad Demons Cave is only responsible for manufacturing golems. The question of how to attack the world of the Grand Xia is the primary responsibility of your Seamless Gate."

"Do you think I'm unaware of how hard it will be for us to deal with the Grand Xia world?" The azure-robed woman looked sideways at the skinny elder. "This time...we'll act against more than half of the commandery cities of the Grand Xia as a test. This will be our first test, our first initial clash that comes before the true war. After the test, after we've gathered enough information...the final battle between our sides will begin."

"Mm. And when do you plan to move?" The skinny elder asked.

"Ten days from now! We'll send out two thousand units to attack in unison!" A cold light flashed through the azure-robed woman's eyes.

The Hallmaster of Bloodcloud Hall and the Cavemaster of the Myriad Demons Cave both turned solemn. They had a feeling of tremendous pressure.

Finally...

They were finally going to act against the world of the Grand Xia, the toughest nut to crack of them all!

Chapter 7 – The Grand Army Mobilizes

It was a blazing summer day. The world seemed to have turned into a gigantic furnace; only late at night did things cool down a bit.

Ji Ning and Yu Wei were standing at the top of a tower within their mountain peak estate. From this location, they could see nearly half of the entire Stillwater City.

"It's been half a year since the Seamless Gate sent out that final note, but they still have yet to move. We have to wait carefully every day...I wonder how long they'll keep us waiting?" Ning said.

"Right now, Stillwater City doesn't just have Sword Immortal Unity; it also has you, junior apprentice-brother. You were able to fight back against nine mighty Celestial Immortals and slay two of them. Now that eighteen years have gone past, they probably have guessed that your power has risen yet again. How could the Seamless Gate behave rashly? They naturally need to make many preparations. To spend half a year in preparations to fight a Celestial Immortal who nearly has the power of a Pure Yang True Immortal, and who is supported by a peerlessly talented monster...it makes sense." Yu Wei continued, "In addition, the more time passes...the more powerful their strike shall most likely be."

Ning nodded. "I understand."

"Junior apprentice-brother." Yu Wei looked at Ning, then said solemnly, "You absolutely must not underestimate the Seamless Gate."

"Haha. Senior apprentice-sister, don't worry. Last time, I ended up suffering mightily at the hands of the Youngflame clan. I've learned from that. This time...I definitely won't be overconfident again." Ning smiled. In recent days, Yu Wei had often reminded him to be careful, to be cautious. It seemed as though the Youngflame clan's exile of him to the Void had caused her to fear something similar would

reoccur.

Ning felt warmed and comforted by this sort of concern.

During the past half year, Ning had more than half-mastered the art of applying heartforce to his Immortal swords. Given a bit more time, he would have fully mastered it. Given that he was experienced in applying heartforce to his sword-fingers, his rate of improvement was quite quick. In addition, Ning also noticed that his rate of improvement in comprehending the Dao of the Sword had been incredibly fast during this past half year. Clearly, his comprehension of the first level of swordforce, which had allowed him to touch upon the innate essence of the sword, had given him a straight path towards fully understanding the Dao of the Sword.

Rumble...

Suddenly, a streak of coresense shot out.

Yu Wei's face changed slightly.

Seeing this, Ning glanced at the skies. "Is it your turn to stand guard, senior apprentice-sister?"

"Yes." Yu Wei nodded.

"Sword Immortal Unity truly is cautious; at every moment of every day, he's using his coresense to cover the entire Stillwater City. Every day, our three Celestial Immortals will rotate in this duty, ensuring there is always perfect coverage." Ning sighed. "As long as the Seamless Gate dares to draw close...there will be no way they can hide it from us at all."

"We are in the light, while they are in the dark; we naturally must be cautious," Yu Wei said. "We are also the weaker side to begin with; if we are overconfident, we'll be in true danger."

Ning nodded. "They've been preparing for so long. I really wonder what sorts of methods the Seamless Gate is preparing."

"When they come, they will strike as swiftly as the thunder," Yu Wei said solemnly.

Ning gave Yu Wei a glance. Of the three Celestial Immortals, Yu Wei was the most pessimistic of the lot. Her attitude had an impact on Ning and the others, causing them to become even more careful. For example, the usage of coresense to keep continual oversight over the city; in truth, this was an extremely tiring thing! Fortunately, their three Celestial Immortals rotated through this duty, which was why they were able to maintain this policy.

While Ji Ning and the forces of Stillwater City were waiting carefully, keeping their coresense spread over the city at all times...on this summer night, the grand army of the Seamless Gate finally began to make their move.

With that black, foggy cave.

Whoosh!

A group of masked, golden-robed figures flew out from the cave, then immediately dispersed into many small squads. They executed a void blink technique and disappeared.

.....

A mysterious teleportation array within a gorge...suddenly flashed.

A large group of masked, golden-robed men immediately appeared within the array. They, too, separated into many small squads, then quickly teleported away to various locations.

.....

Deep within a region of rippling fog, two golden-robed figures appeared.

.....

In almost the same instant, two thousand squads had silently arrived at the world of the Grand Xia. They all dispersed towards their respective targets.

Within a desolate, wild region.

Two golden-robed figures were standing amidst the grass, message talismans in their hands.

"Big brother, thank goodness we joined the Seamless Gate rather than stay with the Xia Emperor. The Seamless Gate really is far too powerful. Their headquarters in the Fifth World...good heavens! We've seen over a million Celestial Immortals gathered together in an amazing display of power, but that represented almost all of the Celestial Immortals which Daofather Crimsonbright commands. But the Fifth World...heh heh, it definitely has at least as many Celestial Immortals as Daofather Crimsonbright does! In fact, when we went to go pay our respects to the Gatemaster of the Seamless Gate, a True Immortal, he told us that those largest, most towering of edifices were meant for Empyrean Gods and True Immortals to reside in. How many Empyrean Gods and True Immortals does that represent?!"

"Haha, third brother, don't be frightened by the words of the Gatemaster. Yes, the power of the Fifth World is inconceivable...but there were more than a thousand of those towering edifices. I refuse to believe they have more than a thousand Empyrean Gods or True Immortals! In addition, I imagine that the Fifth World has most likely prepared multiple palaces for everyone at the level of the Gatemaster. Some are used for resting, some are used for training and meditation, some are used for receiving guests...and so if you calculate it that way, the number isn't that terrifying." The more heavyset golden-robed figure said, "However...that Fifth World truly is one of their headquarters with awesome power. They actually dared to gather so many forces there...that means they are at least capable of withstanding a Daofather. Otherwise, the Daofathers would've wiped them out long ago."

"Right." The other golden-robed man nodded.

"If the Fifth World used its full power against the world of the Grand Xia, they would probably be able to annihilate it in just a few days. But the Fifth World needs to assault many major worlds; it is the principal responsibility of that Gatekeeper of the Seamless Gate to assault our Grand Xia," the heavyset golden-robed man said.

"Only after we completely surrendered were we trusted enough to be allowed to go to the Fifth World," the skinnier golden-robed figure said. "Now...this time, the Gatekeeper assigned us to deal with the Flamedoor Commandery, and instructed us to fight with that female Immortal of the Flamedoor Commandery. However...it's only meant to be an act, a mock-fight."

"No need to even think about it; she's probably joined the Seamless Gate as well. That's why we are only going to put on a show of fighting her," the heavyset golden-robed man said. "What's true is false; what's false is true. Only when the waters are muddied can one fish from them in secret. So long as Flamedoor Commandery comes under attack, the Xia Emperor will probably feel much less suspicion towards that female Immortal of the commandery."

"Right. This time, we've been told that two thousand squads numbering more than ten thousand people have been sent out. I wonder how many are Celestial Immortals and how many are Loose Immortals? And how many are joinees like us, while how many were members of the Seamless Gate to begin with?"

"Who cares? That's not for us to know or worry about."

"Right. Still...why haven't the talismans shattered yet?"

Both of them were holding a message talisman. Once the talisman shattered, it meant that the time had come for them to make their move!

They were waiting a few tens of thousands of kilometers outside of

Flamedoor City; they'd be able to arrive there with a single void blink. They just needed the order.

Crack!

The talismans shattered.

The faces of both figures instantly changed. No longer in the mood to chat, they immediately void blinked towards Flamedoor City.

Deep within a foggy region outside Flamedoor City. A total of eighteen figures had appeared atop the clouds, each of whom were dressed in golden robes. However, their golden robes were slightly different from ordinary golden robes. Their golden robes were all covered with various decorations such as flowers, Godbeasts, clouds, mountains, and other things.

All of their auras were extraordinary.

"Everyone, per the orders of the Gatemaster, I shall lead you all today," Celestial Immortal Violetgrass said. "I know that I am lacking in experience, and so I'd like to ask everyone to be patient with me."

"Little sister Violetgrass, although you haven't trained for very long, your talent is exceptional. You are now amongst the top-tier Celestial Immortals, comparable to the rest of us; I imagine that in the future, we'll be asking you to take care of us!"

This was the response from the other Celestial Immortals.

They all knew quite well that Celestial Immortal Violetgrass was heavily doted upon by the Gatemaster, and she was also protected by Celestial Immortal Blackheaven and many other powerful figures. It was guaranteed that in the future, her status would be higher than theirs.

"This time, the Gatemaster has sent out two thousand squads; this shall be the final time we test the enemy's strength in detail, with the true war against the Grand Xia to begin right afterwards. The

purpose of all this is to get a good sense of any powers or abilities the Grand Xia is hiding. The mission of almost every squad is to probe the our foes, with a few squads meant for putting on a show; only very, very few squads are meant to wipe out the foes!" Celestial Immortal Violetgrass swept them with her gaze as she said solemnly, "And our squad...is one of those meant to wipe out our foes!"

"Celestial Immortal Unity is too stubborn; there's no way he'll bend the neck for us," Violetgrass said. "He is incredibly powerful, and he might break through to the Pure Yang True Immortal level at any moment. His ability to wait and endure is also incredible; if we just let him do as he pleases, he'll most likely become a major impediment to the Seamless Gate's subjugation of the Grand Xia. Since we can't recruit him...then we have to eliminate him!"

The Xia Emperor wasn't sure about the loyalties of many Celestial Immortals; for example, he couldn't be sure if even the capture of Celestial Immortal Hunchmont was part of an act or not. The Seamless Gate, however, knew everything! They knew that they truly had captured Hunchmont and had used everything they could think of to force Unity to capitulate...but alas, all their efforts had failed.

"At present, Stillwater City has Celestial Immortal Unity, Immortal Diancai, the Rainbowflame Fairy, and Sword Immortal Darknorth, also known as Ji Ning." Violetgrass said seriously, "Immortal Diancai and the Rainbowflame Fairy are fairly weak; they aren't worth mentioning. Celestial Immortal Unity and Sword Immortal Darknorth, however, are no ordinary figures. If Celestial Immortal Unity was by himself, there would be no need at all for the eighteen of us to join forces...but now, Sword Immortal Darknorth has emerged."

The other seventeen all nodded.

They had all received reports regarding Sword Immortal Darknorth, Ji Ning. Prior to this, they had been battling across other major worlds. Only after being gathered here had they received Ji Ning's intelligence report...and after reading it, they had been badly shocked.

Sword Immortal Darknorth...Ji Ning!

The champion of the Conclave of Immortal Destiny, a disciple of one of the most supreme Daofathers of the Three Realms, a practitioner of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], a wielder of astonishing sword-arts, a possessor of incredible divine abilities, and who had been able to fight nine Celestial Immortals of the Youngflame clan as a Void-level Earth Immortal...and kill two of them! Although he had trained for less than a century, he was able to survive even the descent of karmic sinflames; he truly was an incomparably astonishing talent.

"Everyone present is a supreme Celestial Immortal, and you are all skilled in using the formation which the Godking created. The eighteen of us are able to somewhat unleash the power of this formation; it should be enough to dominate anyone below the Empyrean God or True Immortal level." Violetgrass said solemnly, "Everyone already has a copy of the plan; we must act in accordance with it. We have to be careful, to tread lightly. If we are overconfident...then Celestial Immortal Unity and Sword Immortal Darknorth will be able to escape!"

"Of course."

"If the eighteen of us fail even when fighting together...once word spreads, we would have no face at all."

They had all reached Celestial Immortal Infatuation's level of power; in fact, some were even slightly stronger.

The eighteen of them joining forces was a more terrifying prospect than a hundred ordinary Celestial Immortals joining forces! These were the true elites of the Seamless Gate; only when the Seamless Gate encountered a truly thorny foe would it send out these elites.

The eighteen Celestial Immortals waited there within the fog, waited for the final order to come. The two thousand squads had to strike at the same time!

A short while later...

Crack!

The message talismans in the hands of the eighteen Celestial Immortals simultaneously shattered!

Chapter 8 – Celestial Immortal Unity

“Let’s go.” Upon seeing the message talisman shatter, a cold light flashed through Celestial Immortal Violetgrass’ eyes. She immediately gave the order.

Whoosh!

Eighteen figures flew towards Stillwater City at high speed, riding the clouds. They were hidden fairly close to Stillwater City to begin with. Once they reached a distance of three thousand kilometers away from Stillwater City, their faces all changed.

“Coresense!”

“A Celestial Immortal from Stillwater City is keeping watch with coresense.”

“We’ve been discovered!”

The eighteen Celestial Immortals all had a bad feeling. They had guessed that Celestial Immortal Unity would be very cautious, but they had never expected this! It had been more than half a year since the final note had been sent...could it be that Celestial Immortal Unity had been maintaining his coresense watch for all that time?

In truth, even though Immortal Diancai, the Rainbowflame Fairy, and Celestial Immortal Unity rotated through this duty, it was still exhausting. Thus, they didn’t cover too much area with their coresense, just the entirety of Stillwater City and three thousand kilometers around it!

It must be understood that given how strong Celestial Immortals were, even the weakest of them would be able to easily stretch their coresense out to a hundred thousand kilometers. But of course, that could only be maintained for a short period of time.

"Although Celestial Immortal Unity is being quite cautious...that is as we expected," Violetgrass sent mentally.

"Right." The other Celestial Immortals weren't worried.

"Let's attack from here. No need to advance any further." Violetgrass gave the order, and the eighteen Celestial Immortals descended from the skies into the desolate wilderness.

Violetgrass released her own coresense, reaching out to touch the coresense of the Celestial Immortal within Stillwater City. Since they had been discovered, there was no need to hide themselves any further. "Unity, our Seamless Gate has arrived. Hurry up and surrender!"

.....

Night.

Stillwater City.

"The Seamless Gate has arrived!" Yu Wei sent this mental message through coresense. Instantly, two other figures flew into the skies and towards her at high speed. One was Celestial Immortal Unity, who flew out from the Marquis Estate; the other was Immortal Diancai. As for Ji Ning...he had been with Yu Wei this entire time.

The entire Stillwater City was merely nine thousand kilometers long, and the Marquis Estate was fairly close to the Black-White College; they were able to instantly assemble.

"They came?" Celestial Immortal Unity landed, his eyes filled with a shocking desire for battle.

"Right. They are three thousand kilometers away from the east gate of Stillwater City," Yu Wei said. "Once they saw my coresense, they immediately landed. They haven't advanced any further."

Celestial Immortal Unity laughed, his laughter filled with a savage

killing intent. "Three thousand kilometers? That's enough! They've already entered the range of our formations."

"Fellow Daoist Unity," Immortal Diancai said hurriedly, "The actual city of Stillwater City was created by the Grand Xia Dynasty; it innately contains tremendous power, and is also filled with many formations. If they don't enter the city proper, there's no way for us to use the innate formations that are built into the city; we can only use the formations which the Northmont clan have laid down. Those formations are significantly weaker; at most, we'll be able to slow them down a bit."

"That's already enough," Celestial Immortal Unity said with a laugh. "The Seamless Gate is very cautious; there's no way they'd be so stupid as to rush straight into the city proper. Activate the formations right now and take control over them."

"Alright." Yu Wei and Immortal Diancai both nodded.

Both of them were Celestial Immortals; when one used Celestial Immortal-level power to activate a formation, the strength of the formation would increase markedly.

.....

Celestial Immortal Violetgrass and the other seventeen Celestial Immortals stood there within the wilderness, quietly staring at that massive city. Although they were three thousand kilometers away, they could still see it with the naked eye.

Rumble...

Suddenly, the world itself seemed to change.

Although it was night...an enormous cloud of fire suddenly appeared in the air above the entire city of Stillwater. Immediately afterwards, the world itself shook. First, an enormous barrier of light appeared, covering the entirety of Stillwater City as well as a region of nearly nine thousand kilometers around it! This grand sealing formation

had a diameter of eighteen thousand kilometers!

"A sealing formation?" Celestial Immortal Violetgrass swept it with a glance; this grand formation had trapped the nearby mountains, forests, and wilderness as well. Since they were three thousand kilometers away from the city, they were naturally included within the formation.

Whoooosh.

Fog began to billow out.

Space began to distort.

The eighteen Celestial Immortals, however, remained quite calm. Violetgrass had seen many things and had an extraordinary status, while the other seventeen had engaged in wars of conquest across other major worlds; they had plenty of experience in these things. They could immediately tell that this sort of grand formation would at most be able to slow them down a bit, but wouldn't be able to have much of an impact. In truth, it wasn't too likely that clans like the Northmont clan of Stillwater could have excessively powerful formations!

"There's no need for us to take things head-on for now," Violetgrass sent mentally. "Given how proud Celestial Immortal Unity is...once he's trapped us here, he'll definitely take the initiative to attack us. If he truly is so cowardly as to refuse to come out...then we'll use our formation to break through his formation with overpowering force."

"Right."

"Don't worry."

These Celestial Immortals were neither overconfident nor in a rush.

For the sake of killing Celestial Immortal Unity, they had made very detailed preparations. However, at their level...in the end, what mattered the most was power! Thus, the eighteen which the

Seamless Gate had gathered here today had more than enough power to slay Celestial Immortal Unity and give him no way to escape.

.....

The walls of Stillwater City.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Four figures descended upon them; Celestial Immortal Unity, Immortal Diancai, Ji Ning, and Yu Wei. Through their control over the formation, Ji Ning and the others were able to see through the bewildering fog and find those eighteen distant Celestial Immortals, even though those eighteen themselves couldn't even tell north from south.

"There's actually eighteen of them?" Immortal Diancai was startled. He gave Unity a glance. "Fellow Daoist Unity, last time you defeated a combined team of thirty-six Celestial Immortals. This time, even though they know that my disciple Ji Ning has returned, they actually have only sent eighteen? It seems as though these eighteen are definitely extraordinary Celestial Immortals."

Ning said, "Fellow Daoist Unity, the Seamless Gate has come with ill intentions. The two of us should fight together; I'll fight in close combat, while you attack from far away. If we join forces..."

"No need." Unity shook his head.

Years ago, when Ning had first met Unity, he had referred to him as 'senior'. However, now that Ning was famous for having fought nine Celestial Immortals head-on and killing two of them, Ning clearly had power comparable to that of a supreme Celestial Immortal. When also factoring in the fact that the Black-White College was his principle source of assistance in dealing with this assault from the Seamless Gate...Unity was naturally no longer willing to allow Ning and the others to refer to him as 'senior'.

However, in their hearts, Ning and Immortal Diancai continued to

feel great reverence for this senior of theirs, Unity.

"No need?" Ning was surprised.

"This battle today is primarily the culmination of my feud with the Seamless Gate," Unity said. "Your Black-White College has already helped me by maintaining a coresense watch for half a year, and you are helping me right now by maintaining this formation. I already feel very grateful for all of this. In this battle with the Seamless Gate...there's no need for you to intervene! The Seamless Gate has definitely prepared many techniques to deal with me, and they must feel confident in their chances. Then if you were to go...I don't want to sound rude, but if you go, your chances of death are very high."

Immortal Diancai and Yu Wei both nodded slowly.

Right.

They knew exactly how formidable Celestial Immortal Unity was; he was almost as strong as a Pure Yang True Immortal! To kill someone like this...the Seamless Gate had to prepare an even more powerful force. If the two of them went, they truly might die if they weren't careful.

"But isn't that going to make things even more dangerous for you, fellow Daoist?" Immortal Diancai asked hurriedly.

"Hahaha, they have their tricks...but so do I!" Unity said confidently, "They've never forced me to the point of going all out before."

Immortal Diancai nodded slowly. Right. Unity had hidden himself away for countless eons, and almost everyone in the Three Realms had thought him to be dead. How strong, exactly, had he become over the course of so many years? Aside from Unity himself, most likely no one else knew.

"Fellow Daoist Unity, even a lion fighting against a rabbit should use all his might," Ning said hurriedly. "The two of them are Ki Refiners, but I am a Fiendgod Body Refiner..."

"No need." Unity frowned. Upon seeing Ning persevere, he added, "If you go, you'll actually slow me down."

Ning blinked.

"Friends of the Black-White College, just watch me butcher them." Unity immediately transformed into a streak of white light as he flew far away.

"Ji Ning, the reason why senior Unity spoke so rudely was because he doesn't want you to go," Immortal Diancai said. "He's a proud, solitary figure by nature; we've already helped him a lot, and he doesn't want to accept our help any further."

"I understand. I'm not angry at all." Ning stared off into the distance. "Let's watch senior Unity battle the Seamless Gate first. If he really does fall into a dangerous situation, I can intervene then."

"Junior apprentice-brother, don't be rash. Watch first." Yu Wei stared off into the distance as well. "Get a sense for exactly how strong they are. If the Seamless Gate is too powerful...there's no need for us to throw our lives away."

"I understand." Ning nodded.

.....

Violetgrass and the other seventeen Celestial Immortals completely ignored the surrounding fog, as well as the illusory images that appeared around them. Suddenly...Violetgrass frowned slightly.

"Assemble into formation," Violetgrass sent mentally. "Baxia."

Instantly, the eighteen Celestial Immortals moved into formation. Six floated in the air while the other twelve remained standing on the ground. At the same time, they began to use their Immortal energy to manifest black tattoo lines. The lines quickly intersected, causing black runes to levitate into the air. Instantly, a blurry light began to cover the eighteen, slowly solidifying into the form of an enormous

black Dragonturtle. The Dragonturtle lay there on the ground, raising its head upwards and letting out a ferocious howl.

Roaaaaaar!

The draconic roar echoed throughout the world, causing even the surrounding mist to somewhat disperse.

"Baxia the Dragonturtle, one of the Nine Sons of the Dragon?" A clear voice rang out as the mist part in front of them. Space solidified, and a long-haired man appeared standing in the air. He no longer looked as ordinary and low-key as he usually did; rather, he looked like a sharp, unsheathed sword that had revealed its fierceness. The long-haired man roared with laughter, "The Baxia Dragonturtle Formation, a formation that manifests one of the Primordial Godbeasts...quite a formidable formation, and one that is suited for defense. This is the perfect counter for me."

"Unity, you still have a chance to join our Seamless Gate," Violetgrass said coldly.

"Oh?" Unity shook his head. "As a person...I really hate it when others try to force me to do something. I'd rather die standing than live kneeling. Come, then...receive a blow from my sword!"

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh

Six streaks of sword-light shot out from Celestial Immortal Unity's head. As they flew through the air, the six streaks began to merge together. Countless runes of light sparkled and flashed as the six Immortal swords completely fused into a single massive broadsword. The broadsword flashed with a white light that caused the hearts of those who saw it to turn cold; this was the legendary 'Supreme Immortal Sword'.

"Arise." Unity had an icy look on his face as he unleashed a sword-art that he had never before used in battle.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Suddenly, within a hundred kilometers of this area, five pillars of light appeared and soared into the skies. These five pillars of light were gold, green, blue, crimson, and yellow, while above the enormous Supreme Immortal Sword appeared two enormous clouds, one white and one black. These two clouds circled and swirled around each other, looking like an enormous Taiji symbol.

The power of this stance was so great that the faces of Violetgrass and the eighteen Celestial Immortals all changed.

"The intelligence report never mentioned such a powerful sword-art!" One of the Celestial Immortals couldn't help but sent a frantic mental message to the others.

Chapter 9 – Ji Ning! Ji Ning!

“Our Baxia Dragonturtle Formation can definitely defend against it,” Celestial Immortal Violetgrass sent frantically. “Let’s make our move as well. Fight back! Kill him!”

As Celestial Immortal Unity used his sword-art, the eighteen enemy Celestial Immortals all activated their own magic treasures as well. They had used the Baxia Dragonturtle Formation and had pooled their Immortal energy together, causing their strength to increase. Now, every single one of them was capable of exploding forth with power comparable to Ji Ning’s, back before Ji Ning suffered the descent of karmic sinflames.

All sorts of colors began to flash in the skies as many magic treasures and spells shot out like a meteor shower, slicing through the air and striking towards Unity.

“The Five Elements are the foundation, the Taiji serves as the guide... this is my Supreme Immortal Swordland.” Light flashed in Unity’s eyes, so dense as to seem almost material. His voice rang out loudly, and the enormous Supreme Immortal Sword within the skies began to come crashing downwards. As it pressed downwards...the enormous Taiji cloud above it, as well as the five pillars of light around it, all instantly connected to it.

An enormous sword-world that was a hundred kilometers in size had been created!

The Supreme Immortal Sword pressed downwards at high speed, and the size of the sword-world was rapidly shrinking as well, from a hundred kilometers to ten kilometers, as it clashed against the magic treasures and spells of those eighteen Celestial Immortals.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

A series of explosions could be heard. The Supreme Immortal Swordland trembled, seemingly growing weaker.

However, the distant Unity just pushed a little bit more of his Immortal energy into it. At the same time, those five roving Five Elements light pillars and the Taiji clouds once more filled the Supreme Immortal Swordland with energy, causing its power to once more be restored.

"Even joining forces, we still can't break it? This supreme ability of Celestial Immortal Unity is actually a sword-world attack on this level. One can't even flee from it; it truly is enough to cause one to feel despair. No wonder he is known as the Supreme Sword Immortal." The faces of the eighteen Celestial Immortals changed. Although the power of each of their magic treasures and spells had increased dramatically, their attacks were scattered and not unified; there was no way to merge their attacks together, and so they were all blocked by the Supreme Immortal Swordland.

The Supreme Immortal Sword continued to press downwards!

The entire sword-world continued to rapidly shrink, quickly compressing down to the size of the enormous Baxia Turtledragon beneath it.

The eighteen Celestial Immortals frantically poured in more of their own Immortal energy to further stabilize the Baxia formation; this formation was extremely suited for defense, and the eighteen entrusted all of their hopes to it.

BOOM! An enormous explosion.

The Supreme Immortal Sword had stabbed straight into the shell of the Baxia Turtledragon, while runes flowed across the shell, striving to defend against the sword.

"....Eh?" Unity's face changed slightly.

"Blocked it. Blocked it!"

"Haha, he's just a single Celestial Immortal, after all; no matter how formidable his abilities are, he's just 'close to' the power of a Pure

Yang True Immortal."

"Did you really think it would be so easy to break this Baxia Formation?"

The eighteen Celestial Immortals instantly felt complete confidence.

"Descend." Unity waved his finger, once more executing the Supreme Immortal Swordland. He wanted to launch multiple attacks to break through the enemy's defensive formation.

.....

The other three watched the battle from far. By using his Supreme Immortal Swordland, Unity had completely crushed the Seamless Gate's forces; although the Seamless Gate's forces had a strong defensive formation, their attacks were completely useless against Unity.

"Senior Unity is controlling the entire battle," Immortal Diancai said with a laugh. "He truly is far too powerful. His sword not only includes the Grand Dao of Taiji, it also includes many of the profound mysteries of the Five Elements. He's perfectly merged them all together into this sword-stroke...most likely, not even a real Pure Yang True Immortal would necessarily have such a powerful technique."

Ning nodded.

For a Celestial Immortal to have close to a Pure Yang True Immortal's power required the Celestial Immortal to be at a very high level of insight into the Dao, and have techniques that were even more powerful than a True Immortal's. This Supreme Immortal Swordland was most likely the result of a fusion of multiple Grand Daos. Although none of these Grand Daos were fully mastered, this sort of perfect fusion was no weaker than a sword-art derived from the complete mastery of a full Grand Dao.

"Quick, look!" The nearby Yu Wei's face suddenly changed.

"Eh?" Ning's face changed as well.

The eighteen distant Celestial Immortals who originally formed into the Baxia Dragonturtle Formation had all retrieved their various magic treasures. The area around them began to manifest multiple azure runes. The eighteen Celestial Immortals gritted their teeth, using their full power as they generated countless strings of power to cover the entire Baxia Formation. Soon...from the shell of the Baxia Dragonturtle appeared the head of an enormous azure serpent. A Turtle-Snake had just been formed, and its power was clearly tremendous.

"A Turtle-Snake?"

"Xuanwu!"

The faces of Ji Ning, Yu Wei, Immortal Diancai, and even Celestial Immortal Unity changed.

The Turtle-Snake had an extremely unique status within the Three Realms. Every single Ki Refiner, upon reaching the Primal-level, would manifest a Primal Turtle-Snake soul. As for Xuanwu the Turtle-Snake...he was a truly powerful figure who had lived since the days of the primordial Pangu's World, and who was honored by everyone with the awe-inspiring title of Grand Emperor. This Turtle-Snake Formation was unfathomably more profound and complicated than the previous Baxia Formation.

"The Baxia Formation was extremely strong defensively to begin with, while this Turtle-Snake Formation was built atop the Baxia Formation, using it as a base and further perfecting it." Upon seeing the enormous Turtle-Snake appear, Unity immediately knew what was happening. "This Turtle-Snake formation...it has the defensive power of the Baxia Dragonturtle Formation, but also has an incredibly strong attack."

Suddenly...

Whoosh!

The titanic azure serpent, previously coiled, suddenly opened its giant, bloody maw. The body of the azure serpent suddenly increased explosively in size as its head transformed to become a hundred kilometers long, seemingly capable of swallowing the universe itself. Unity hurriedly used his Supreme Immortal Sword to block, but the serpent head seemed to be illusory, biting down and swallowing Unity within it. Unity hurriedly controlled the Supreme Immortal Sword to transform back into six streaks of sword-light that returned to his side, protecting him.

"What?!"

"But, but..." Immortal Diancai and Yu Wei were both stunned.

"Heaven Swallower?" Ning frowned. This was an ability which Grand Emperor Xuanwu was born with...and this Turtle-Snake Formation was actually capable of replicating it? Clearly, the creator of this formation had perfected this formation to a level where it was nearly identical to an actual Turtle-Snake.

"In our Turtle-Snake Formation, the turtle focuses on defense while the snake focuses on attack." Violetgrass and the rest of her Celestial Immortals were quite delighted; this Turtle-Snake Formation had just as strong a defense as the earlier Baxia Formation had. This was indeed quite a flawless formation with astonishing power. However, it was extremely hard to execute; these eighteen supreme Celestial Immortals were only able to just barely set it up with tremendous effort.

"Kill!"

Unity was completely trapped within the body of the azure serpent. He once more executed his Supreme Immortal Swordland from inside the body, but as he did yet another serpent head appeared, beginning to wildly assault him. The serpent head would appear and disappear at random in an unpredictable manner, causing Unity to

be an extremely difficult situation. From the looks of it, he wouldn't be able to hold on for too long.

"Once the Turtle-Snake Formation appears, it dominates anyone below the Empyrean God or True Immortal level." Violetgrass and the others were all completely confident.

.....

"It's over."

"Not even Celestial Immortal Unity can break this Turtle-Snake Formation, and the attacks of that azure serpent are unpredictable and unfathomable." Immortal Diancai, standing at the walls of Stillwater City, revealed a look of despair. Yu Wei's face was ashen as well. Neither of them were in a position to help. In the face of the power of the Turtle-Snake Formation...they both knew that they were far too weak.

Most likely, only a true Empyrean God or True Immortal would be able to break this formation.

"Damn." Ning's face changed when he saw this. He could tell that Unity wasn't going to be able to hold on for much longer.

Swoosh!

Ning immediately executed the [Obscuring Wind of the Nine Heavens] and charged out.

"Ji Ning!" Immortal Diancai's face instantly changed dramatically. "Ji Ning, don't go! STOP!"

"JUNIOR APPRENTICE-BROTHER!" Yu Wei began to panic as well. She hurriedly moved to use the formation to impact Ning and prevent him from going out.

However...all three of them, Ji Ning, Yu Wei, and Immortal Diancai, were very familiar with this formation. In fact, each of them had left

their own runic imprints upon the core of the formation; any of the four were capable of taking control over it! The formation might be able to block others, but there was no way it could block Ji Ning.

"Junior apprentice-brother, that formation is too powerful. Not even Celestial Immortal Unity is a match for it. Don't be a fool!" Yu Wei sent frantically with her coresense.

"Disciple, as your master, I order you to come back RIGHT NOW!" Immortal Diancai grew even more frantic.

Swoosh! Swoosh!

The two were so frantic that they flew out from the city walls, chasing after Ning.

Although they had faith in Ning's power...they had just personally witnessed the utterly terrifying might of the Turtle-Snake Formation. In terms of defensive strength, not even the most powerful sword attack of Celestial Immortal Unity could break it. In terms of offensive strength, that azure serpent was unfathomable and mysterious in its movements, and it could even seemingly swallow the heavens themselves. Even Unity was at the brink of death! If Ji Ning became trapped in the azure serpent as well...that would mean he, too, would be doomed!

Swoosh! Ning didn't slow down at all.

"Ji Ning, that Turtle-Snake Formation's azure serpent is clearly perfect for binding and restricting the movements of foes. Although your body is unbreakable as a magic treasure, this formation is a perfect counter for you. If you go, you'll die!" Yu Wei frantically flew towards Ning's direction, but Ning had the [Obscuring Wind of the Nine Heavens] divine ability; given his speed, how could Yu Wei possibly catch up to him?

And...by now, Ning had already reached the Turtle-Snake Formation.

The eighteen Celestial Immortals of the Seamless Gate were using

their full power to have the Turtle-Snake Formation kill Unity. Now, however, they saw Ji Ning flying towards them.

"Ji Ning?"

"He actually dares to come after seeing the power of our Turtle-Snake Formation?" The eighteen Celestial Immortals were shocked.

"Perfect. We'll first use our full power to have the formation kill Unity, and after Unity dies we will kill Ji Ning! We'll break them apart one by one, then kill them all! As for Ji Ning...just let the turtle part of the formation block his attacks," Violetgrass sent mentally.

"Right." The other seventeen agreed with here.

After all...if they had to simultaneously deal with both Ji Ning and Unity, it would be quite taxing, even for them. Thus, it was better to first ignore Ji Ning and focus on killing Unity, then dealing with Ji Ning next. The defense of the Turtle-Snake Formation was comparable to the Baxia Formation, so he wouldn't be an issue anyways.

Whoosh!

As Ning appeared, the fingers of his right hand suddenly formed into sword-fingers. Swish! His sword-fingers instantly expanded to become more than three thousand meters long. They were like an enormous sword that filled the entire sky, and at the tip of the sword-fingers there was a silvery-white aura. In this instant, Ning activated the Fourth Cycle of the [Starseizing Hand], and also poured his heartforce into his sword-fingers.

The [Starseizing Hand]...swordforce...and heartforce. All together!

"Junior apprentice-brother!"

"Ji Ning!" Yu Wei and Immortal Diancai, paying attention to nothing else, flew over towards Ning, panicking as they watched this all happen.

Whooooosh.

The utterly enormous sword-fingers descended with unfathomable power.

Only when the sword-fingers actually slammed against the Turtle-Snake Formation did the faces of the eighteen Celestial Immortals suddenly change, and change dramatically at that. However...it was too late. SLASH! The Turtle-Snake Formation was completely unable to withstand this terrifying sword-finger attack of Ning's. It was instantly ripped apart!

As the three thousand meter long sword-fingers broke through the Turtle-Snake Formation, it sliced sideways as well. The Celestial Immortals all felt as though mountains were slamming against them...and in an instant, six Celestial Immortals died!

"But..." Violetgrass and the other surviving Celestial Immortals were stunned. "Impossible. This Turtle-Snake Formation is invincible against anyone below the Empyrean God or True Immortal level."

Yes. Normally speaking, this Turtle-Snake Formation they used truly was invincible against anyone below the Empyrean God or True Immortal level.

But Ji Ning...was different.

When he fought against the Youngflame clan, he was already very close to being at the very peak of power possible for a Celestial Immortal. Afterwards, in the Nihilum Zone, had had broken through to the seventeenth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]; this breakthrough in divine power alone had put him very close to a Pure Yang True Immortal in terms of combat power, comparable to Celestial Immortal Unity!

In addition to that...Ning's heartforce had reached the third stage, and he had gained swordforce as well.

He was now able to instantly use up a fifteenth of his third-stage

heartforce in a single blow. This represented an utterly astonishing amount of power! And now, swordforce was added into the mix as well! Ji Ning, who had already been close to a Pure Yang True Immortal in power, had instantly leapt past that gap. In terms of attack power, he already had truly reached the level of an Empyrean God or True Immortal!

"Can it be that he's actually an Empyrean God or a True Immortal?!"
Violetgrass and the others stared in terror at the distant Ji Ning. All of them began to move to flee, no longer even thinking about fighting back...but Ning let out a savage roar:

"THREE HEADS, SIX ARMS!"

Whooooooooosh.

That single set of sword-fingers...had suddenly transformed into six sets of sword-fingers, slashing through the skies towards them.

Chapter 10 – Great Danger

"Impossible. There's no way he can be an Empyrean God or True Immortal. If he had already overcome his tribulation...there's no way he could've hidden it past us, the Seamless Gate!" Violetgrass and the rest of the twelve surviving Celestial Immortals began to flee in terror. Ji Ning's tremendous power was great enough for them to feel that he was an Empyrean God or a True Immortal...but that didn't make sense!

It wasn't possible!

Ji Ning had the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] and was capable of masking an Immortal aura, but he still had to undergo the Celestial Tribulation; there was no way something like that could've escaped the eyes of the Seamless Gate! In fact...no tribulation of any living creature in the Three Realms could escape the eyes of the Seamless Gate!

"Ahhh!" A fleeing Celestial Immortal with a big bushy beard attempted to use a large gourd to block, but Ning's sword-finger knocked it flying away, then executed him. He perished and his Dao came to an end.

"How could Ji Ning be this powerful?!" The various Celestial Immortals all let out agonized cries of grief and rage. Sword-fingers criss-crossed the skies with annihilating, slaying power.

"The intelligence reports were wrong. WRONG!"

"What the hell?!"

"I can't believe this!"

These Celestial Immortals were all elites of the Seamless Gate. They normally only acted after they were given very accurate intelligence reports; as the saying went, only when one knew one's self and one's foes could one be the victor in every battle. A major error like this...it

had truly never happened before! At their level, once one made a single error of this magnitude, the penalty would be one's life!

Ning executed [Three Heads, Six Arms]. His six sword-fingers assaulted six different Celestial Immortals...but these six strikes only used the [Starseizing Hand] and swordforce. His seventeenth stage [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens] power, combined with the Fourth Cycle of the [Starseizing Hand], was already comparable to that of supreme Celestial Immortals. If he added swordforce to it as well...his power was definitely no longer than that of Celestial Immortal Unity's.

In other words...Ning's six sword-fingers were like six Celestial Immortal Unity's.

Right now, the enemy formation had already been shattered. They were all fleeing; there was no need for him to add his heartforce into the mix. Heartforce was far too tiring, and each full-strength blow from his sword used up a fifteenth of it. He could only use it for fifteen strikes; naturally, Ning was going to save it for the most critical moments.

"Hmph." A cold light flashed through through Ning's eyes. He showed no mercy at all with his killing blows.

His six sword-fingers instantly slaughtered five of the Celestial Immortals. One of them had been aimed towards the woman...and this one failed.

"Eh?" Ning glanced towards the woman in surprise. A thick layer of azure light had appeared around her body. This azure light was protecting her, having blocked Ning's earlier sword-finger.

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"Too powerful. Our intelligence reports were completely wrong." Violetgrass was still terrified. A pair of talismans appeared in her hands, as well as a Dao-seal. The Dao-seal was a Greater

Teleportation Dao-seal...however, using it would require time. Given Ning's attack speed, that period of time would be more than enough for him to launch more than ten attacks.

Crack! Crack!

Shattering the talismans could be done near-instantly. Violetgrass immediately shattered the two talismans belonging to the two powerful experts capable of saving her.

Her status in the Seamless Gate was extremely special, and she was protected by several major figures. Aside from the supreme Celestial Immortals such as Celestial Immortal Blackheaven, there were two True Immortals as well; the Gatemaster of the Seamless Gate and her brother-in-law, True Immortal Gaudy.

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The distant Fifth World.

Within one of the towering edificies, the Gatemaster of the Seamless Gate, the Cavemaster of the Myriad Demons Cave, and the Hallmaster of Bloodcloud Hall were staring at many mirrors that were hanging in midair. The mirrors had many different images within them; these were their various gathering spots within the world of the Grand Xia. They were using Pure Yang treasures to keep watch over the battles in those areas and also transmit the images back.

Many of the images would often flicker through various locations. There were ten-plus water mirrors, however, which had stable images within them. This was because these ten-plus water mirrors were keeping watch over missions where the goal was to kill the foes.

"Not good."

"Something unexpected has just happened at Stillwater city."

"It's Ji Ning!"

The faces of three leaders changed dramatically as they turned to focus on one of the water mirrors. The water mirror displayed the image of a youth soaring into the heavens. His sword-finger chopped through the heavens and broke apart the Turtle-Snake Formation. The cold look on the youth's face, that heart-stoppingly sharp aura and pose, and the sharp silvery-white light at the tip of the sword-fingers all caused them to shudder in amazement.

"This Ji Ning's aura is far more terrifying than it was eighteen years ago."

"Is that...swordforce coming from his sword-fingers?"

"Can it be that he's mastered the Dao of the Sword?"

The three leaders were truly rather stunned. They had guessed long ago that Ji Ning, having survived the descent of the karmic sinflames, would have grown somewhat more powerful but...in the Nihilum Zone, there was no way to sense any of the Grand Daos! Logically speaking, Ji Ning shouldn't have improved much with regards to the Daos. Given that he had yet to overcome his tribulation...there should've been a limit to how much he could've grown stronger. However, Ji Ning had just slapped their expectations in the face!

They could never have guessed that Ji Ning would've been able to come up with a way to apply heartforce, all on his own!

"Azurefox, what should we do?" The Cavemaster of the Myriad Demon Caves and the Hallmaster of Bloodcloud Hall both looked towards the Gatemaster of the Seamless Gate.

The azure-robed woman said softly, "The results of that battle have already been determined. There's no way to change things. Still... Violetgrass has True Immortal Gaudy standing behind her. If she's in any life-threatening danger, she'll definitely break the talisman which Gaudy gave her. I trust that Gaudy will definitely intervene to

save her. If Gaudy goes, that'll be enough. Right now, the question in my mind is...what are we supposed to do about this Ji Ning?"

"Ji Ning..." The fire-robed man and the skinny elder both began to frown.

"I guessed long ago that he would eventually become an impediment to our subjugation of the Grand Xia, but I didn't expect that he would become so powerful even prior to overcoming his tribulation. If we wait and let him overcome his tribulation and become an Empyrean God...that's not acceptable!" The azure-robed woman shook her head. "I really wonder who the hell his master is, for him to produce a monster like this..."

For a peerless monster like this to be forged, not only did the 'raw materials' have to be superb, the master had to be good as well. They had no idea...that behind Ji Ning stood the most mysterious Daofather of the Three Realms, Patriarch Subhuti, as well as the already-deceased Daoist Threelives, the creator of the [Starseizing Hand], the supreme divine ability that had shaken the Three Realms.

As the saying went, the master could show the way but the student had to walk the path. Still...the master showing the way came first! Ning was indeed born to be a peerless Sword Immortal, but if he didn't have the [Starseizing Hand] divine ability, there's no way he could've become as monstrous as this. If he hadn't learned [Houyi's Archery], he probably wouldn't have been able to come up with a way to apply heartforce. He would only be a 'normal' but powerful Sword Immortal. But of course...a good master and a good student made for a good pair; both were necessary! Several people had the chance to learn the [Starseizing Hand], and quite a few had learned [Houyi's Archery], but how many of them had ever reached Ning's level?

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"Inconceivable."

Celestial Immortal Unity, having dodged a disaster, was stunned by Ji Ning. For a moment, he had many complicated, strange feelings in his heart.

"Where do you think you are going?" Unity quickly came back to his senses. Letting out an angry roar, he immediately controlled his Supreme Immortal Sword to go slaughter the fleeing Celestial Immortals.

Yu Wei and Immortal Diancai, who had been chasing after Ning from behind, were both stunned as well.

They felt both shock and joy.

Shock...because Ji Ning was this powerful! Too powerful!

Joy...because the more powerful Ji Ning was, the better!

The entire situation had been completely changed. Those eighteen Celestial Immortals had been dominating Unity, but now they were being chased and slaughtered.

"KILL!" Ning showed no mercy whatsoever. Moments ago, he had used a single full-force sword-finger to wipe out six Celestial Immortals. Just now, he had killed five more...leaving only seven survivors.

[Three Heads, Six Arms]! [Starseizing Hand]!

Six sword-fingers once more streaked through the heavens in every direction.

"Die!" Unity also controlled his Supreme Immortal Sword to chase after and slaughter the remaining foes.

"The storm has come. Yesterday, I killed others; today, others shall kill me." As a skinny Celestial Immortal's magic treasure was knocked flying away, he shut his eyes. The only thing that had been in his eyes was tranquility. A calamitous storm had swept the entire Three

Realms, and even the likes of Ji Ning, Celestial Immortal Unity, Yu Wei, and the others had all mentally prepared themselves for death.

Thus...they had to seize every opportunity that appeared before them. When slaughtering weak foes, no mercy was to be shown.

Kill! Kill! KILL!

One Celestial Immortal after another died. One of Ning's six sword-fingers once more struck towards the fleeing Celestial Immortal Violetgrass.

BOOM! The azure light around Violetgrass was actually able to endure the blows, but it was now clearly shuddering.

However...this time, Ning's six sword-fingers only managed to slay three Celestial Immortals. Aside from Violetgrass, two others had managed to survive as well.

"I have to survive. I have to!" A Celestial Immortal with triangular pupils had a twisted look on his face and a terrifying look in his eyes. He manifested an Immortal estate out of nowhere, then disappeared into it.

The other Celestial Immortal had also hidden into an Immortal estate.

"Kill!"

The Supreme Immortal Sword slaughtered another Celestial Immortal.

By now...

Only three of the original eighteen Celestial Immortals were left. They were Celestial Immortal Violetgrass and the two who had hidden themselves within their Immortal estates.

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"Idiots!" Violetgrass, seeing this, couldn't help but curse to herself. Their intelligence reports had stated that one of the two Celestial Immortals of the Youngflame clan which Ji Ning had slain was Celestial Immortal Goldclock. As a result, his divine greatclock had fallen into Ji Ning's hands. Given that Stillwater City was in a dangerous situation...as long as Ji Ning wasn't stupid, he would have given it to his Dao-companion or his master. That divine greatclock was capable of suppressing and binding!

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"Senior apprentice-sister," Ning roared mentally towards her.

"Get in here." Yu Wei waved her hand, and the divine greatclock flew out. It quickly expanded in size until it became the size of a small mountain. It hung there in the skies, and the space at the base of the greatclock began to twist and distort. The two Immortal estates were immediately sucked into the greatclock without being able to resist at all...then the divine greatclock once more shrank down and flew back to Yu Wei's hands.

Ning laughed.

This divine greatclock was one of the most important, clan-protecting treasures of the Youngflame clan. Aside from the Worldhold Pagoda, it was the most important treasure the entire clan had. However, only Celestial Immortals were capable of wielding a Pure Yang treasure. Given that Stillwater City was facing a crisis and that a storm was approaching the Three Realms, how could Ning have been so selfish as to only think of himself? He naturally wanted to come up with ways to help the people he cared about grow more powerful, and so he had given the divine greatclock to Yu Wei.

Those two Celestial Immortals had hidden themselves within their Immortal estates in the hopes of buying themselves some time to use Greater Teleportation Dao-seals. If Ning's group didn't have the divine greatclock, they actually might've managed to escape; after all, there was no way for them to destroy those Immortal estates. Those

Immortal estates were meant to save the lives of those two Celestial Immortals and were quite sturdy.

However, Ning's group DID have that divine greatclock. The Immortal estates themselves were not capable of resisting such an effect, and so as soon as those two Celestial Immortals had hidden themselves within their estates, their estates had been effortlessly sucked into the divine greatclock. The divine greatclock possessed a completely independent dimension within it; once one was suppressed inside it, there was no way to escape at all.

This was why Violetgrass had called them fools.

However...how could the two not have realized this? They were already faced with certain death, and so they had no choice but to make this gamble. Their gamble was that Ning was a very selfish person who hadn't been willing to give the divine greatclock to others.

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"You are the last one left." Ning's gaze turned towards Celestial Immortal Violetgrass. All six of his sword-fingers stabbed through the skies towards Violetgrass. Although all of this had taken time to describe, the exchange of attacks had actually happened very quickly, as fast as lightning.

"You can't kill me!!!" Violetgrass was utterly terrified...but how could she possibly flee faster than the speed of those sword-fingers?

Those six sword-fingers flew through the skies, piercing through space and converging upon the same point.

"STAY YOUR HAND!"

A roar rang out, filled with the power of Pure Yang-level energy.

BOOM!!!!

The grand sealing formation outside was blasted apart, and the enraged roar echoed within the ears of Ning and the others.

BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM!!!!!!

The six sword-fingers simultaneously struck Celestial Immortal Violetgrass. The azure barrier was no longer able to endure any longer. It blew apart into tiny pieces...and under the blows of the six massive sword-fingers, Violetgrass's body was instantly reduced to dust. She perished, her Dao coming to an end!

Chapter 11 – Shooting A True Immortal

The imperial capital of the Grand Xia. Within a palace hall inside the Skylight Palace that glowed with a dull red light.

The black-robed Xia Emperor was seated atop his throne. Beneath him were a trio of generals, armored in dazzling golden armor. Their auras were incredibly powerful, no weaker than the aura of the Xia Emperor himself; clearly, they were Empyrean Gods or True Immortals! All three of them sat with backs straight, filled with an aura of desolation and slaughter. For the Primordial Imperial Clan...it was quite simple for them to be able to summon and command Empyrean Gods and True Immortals as they would ordinary soldiers.

Whoooosh.

Many images were projected in midair; these were the battles images that were being transmitted from many locations. The Xia Emperor had incredible control over the world of the Grand Xia. Once there were any ripples at the Celestial Immortal level, he would immediately find out.

"Young master Xiamang, it seems this Seamless Gate really holds our Primordial Imperial Clan in high regard; they've sent two thousand forces to launch a simple probing attack. There are far too many places with battles...there's no way for you to find them all, one by one." One of the three, an old man with a fiery red beard, let out a loud laugh. Flames appeared to be blazing within his eyes as well.

"I don't have enough Pure Yang treasures to keep an eye on two thousand different battles at once," the black-robed Xia Emperor said with a smile. There were only a few hundred images in midair; this was his limit with regards to how many places he could keep watch on at once.

One of the hundreds of images, however...was of the battle at Stillwater City!

After all, Stillwater City had an incredibly powerful figure, Celestial Immortal Unity, and the monstrously talented Ji Ning, who had an awe-inspiring backer!

"What formation are those eighteen Celestial Immortals setting up? A Turtle-Snake Formation?"

"Celestial Immortal Unity is in danger!"

All of them instantly noticed what was happening in this battle. After all, part of those two thousand battles were merely play-fights, while most of the rest were probing attacks; only a very small number were assassination attempts. The assassination attempts naturally drew their attention.

"Hmph." The Xia Emperor's face sank, but he continued to watch. He gave no orders for now.

The images showed how Celestial Immortal Unity had become trapped within the Turtle-Snake Formation. Suddenly...the faces of the Xia Emperor and his three golden-armored generals all changed, because they saw a youth use a divine ability to charge forward through the skies.

"Ji Ning?" The Xia Emperor frowned. "Is he crazy?"

"Is this person the 'Ji Ning' you've been paying attention to, young master xiamang?"

"He's a bit too unwise, isn't he?"

The three generals all shook their heads slightly...but suddenly, their facial expressions stiffened.

Within the images, Ji Ning's sword-fingers suddenly expanded to become three thousand meters long. They lashed through the skies like an enormous divine sword, chopping down upon the Turtle-Snake Formation. The tough and incomparably tenacious Turtle-Snake Formation was actually completely shattered by this terrifying

sword-finger attack. Caught completely off guard, six of the eighteen Celestial Immortals perished.

"What?!" The Xia Emperor jumped to his feet, a look of amazement in his eyes.

"Impossible." The three generals had stood up as well. They all stared unblinkingly at the images.

Within the images, Ji Ning had just used [Three Heads, Six Arms] and was chasing after and massacring the fleeing Celestial Immortals. The Xia Emperor, in front of these three generals, didn't feel any need to maintain his normal aura of dignified majesty. He said incredulously, "What's going on? I don't know if Ji Ning's Primaltwin has undergone the tribulation yet, but his true body definitely has not."

"If his true body had succeeded in overcoming the Empyrean Tribulation, he would be an Empyrean God by now. His divine abilities, spells, and other abilities would all be far stronger than they are now."

"He clearly has not yet overcome his tribulation to become an Empyrean God!"

"But if he isn't an Empyrean God...how could he be this powerful? Is it really possible for a Void-level Fiendgod to be this powerful?" Countless thoughts were rummaging through the Xia Emperor's mind.

As for the three generals, they were no less stunned than the Xia Emperor was. The most muscular general actually began to frown. "A Void-level Fiendgod...even if he learned some of the most supreme divine abilities of the Three Realms, allowing him to become close to a Pure Yang True Immortal in power...he should only be roughly equivalent to Celestial Immortal Unity. How could he be this much more powerful than Celestial Immortal Unity? The level of power he's displayed has completely transcended the gap between the Void-

level and Empyrean Gods."

"What a monster." The Xia Emperor stared at Ning, stared at him as though he was looking at the most precious treasure that existed in the world. A look of actual greed was in his eyes.

"Congratulations, young master Xiamang."

The three generals simultaneously spoke these words.

The black-robed Xia Emperor chortled as well.

Indeed, this was something worth celebrating!

He was born a member of the Primordial Imperial Clan...and the greatest strength of the clan was that they were extremely unified. The reason why the Imperial Clan able to become the imperial clan of the Primordial Era was precisely because they had a large number of True Gods and Daofathers within their ranks....but clearly, these True Gods and Daofathers couldn't have all been born into the Imperial Clan. Why, then, did all of them support the Primordial Imperial Clan?

It was precisely because the Primordial Imperial Clan had provided them with nonstop support prior to them becoming truly powerful. Given that the Primordial Imperial Clan had been so benevolent towards them...how could the True Gods and Daofathers not wish to pay back their kindnesses?

It must be understood that the more powerful one was, the more one cared about one's Dao-heart, and the less willing one would become to feel indebted.

If someone had treated you with great kindness, but you refused to repay it...you would feel discomfort. This would impact your Dao-heart; in fact, in extremely dire cases, it could even cause you to go down a path of madness! Naturally, there was a very small number of True Gods or Daofathers who walked an extremely vile path; no matter how well you treated them, they would still kill you without

blinking, which wouldn't impact their Dao-heart at all. However, these people were quite rare, after all.

"Ji Ning?" The Xia Emperor's eyes were shining. He now viewed Ning as a monster who would truly be of benefit to him...and one who hadn't even undergone his tribulation!

He had the feeling...

That so long as Ji Ning didn't die, it wouldn't be hard for him to become an Empyrean God or True Immortal. In fact, he might even become one of the most supreme Empyrean Gods or True Immortals! To be able to make someone like this one of his closest allies...the Xia Emperor felt that this was utterly wonderful! And of course, if by some great stroke of luck Ji Ning became a True God or a Daofather, the Xia Emperor would bow down to thank Heaven and Earth.

Why was the Xia Emperor's status so special? It was because, aside from the fact that his master was a Daofather, his lifelong friend, his brother...was Daofather Raindragon!

In the end, a master was just a teacher; he might provide some guidance to the Xia Emperor and behave benevolently towards him, but if the Xia Emperor truly ran into trouble, Daofather Crimsonbright might or might not actually intervene to help him. In fact, even if Daofather Crimsonbright were to watch the Xia Emperor died, it wouldn't impact his Dao-heart; after all, the Daofather had many disciples. In addition, it was his disciples who owed him, not the other way around.

Daofather Raindragon, however, was another story. Daofather Raindragon was one of the Xia Emperor's lifelong friends, his brother; this was a far closer relationship!

Now, the Xia Emperor was going to do everything he could to help Ji Ning and ensure that Ji Ning would remember how kindly the Xia Emperor had treated him. In the future, if the Xia Emperor encountered a crisis and asked Ji Ning to help...how could Ji Ning

possibly just sit back and watch with his hands clasped behind his back?

"What a monster. From the Primordial Era to the present day, this is the greatest monster I've ever seen." The black-robed Xia Emperor stared at the image of Ji Ning. Although the Primordial Era had given birth to some true monsters as well, the Xia Emperor hadn't personally met them...but right here and now, a real, living, breathing monster was standing right in front of him.

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Outside Stillwater City.

True Immortal Gaudy had a handsome face. He was famous for being a relaxed, graceful man...but his face was twisted right now. This was because he had just saw that little girl Violetgrass, who he had watched grow up, be killed before his very eyes! As soon as he had sensed Violetgrass shattering her talisman, he had immediately used Greater Teleportation to come to this place. He had mastered the Grand Dao of Qiankun long ago, and so he no longer needed to use Dao-talismans to perform Greater Teleportation.

However, since he had come here from another major world, he wasn't able to perfectly sense where Violetgrass was; he was only able to get a general idea of where she was located.

His Greater Teleportation had taken him outside Stillwater City. By relying on his attunement to Qiankun and Space, he instantly found Violetgrass and understood that she was in danger. He immediately broke apart the grand sealing formation, but because he wasn't able to make it right away, he hurriedly sent a mental message to call for a halt. Alas...the youth hadn't hesitated at all. He had used all six arms of his [Three Heads, Six Arms] technique to launch sword-fingers attacks at Violetgrass and slay her.

"Little sister Violetgrass..." True Immortal Gaudy's control over Qiankun was so great that it was as though he personally watched it

happen. It was as though he personally watched Violetgrass be transformed into dust.

"No..."

True Immortal Gaudy's eyes instantly turned completely bloodshot, and his face began to twist.

"All of you will DIE!" True Immortal Gaudy went completely berserk. An enormous grand seal that was black and white suddenly appeared. This grand seal was primarily black, while the sides of it were white. The grand black-white seal appeared out of nowhere, instantly transforming to be the size of a mountain as it smashed downwards. Although the local protective formations were strong, True Immortal Gaudy had mastered the Grand Dao of Qiankun and was skilled in formations. In addition, he was simply too strong, far more so than his foes.

BOOM!

The grand seal completely smashed through the protective formations.

On the other side.

"Ji Ning, be careful!"

"An enemy has arrived!"

"He's broken the sealing formation; it should be an Empyrean God or a True Immortal." Immortal Diancai, Yu Wei, and Unity all sent frantic mental messages.

"Hurry up and leave!" Ning immediately understood; he had previously controlled the formation as well, after all. Right as he killed Violetgrass, Ning manifested a black greatbow in front of him. Stretching his hand out, Ning grabbed the black greatbow with one hand. Within his other hand, an arrow appeared, instantly blazing with flames as it did.

In midair, Ning immediately nocked the arrow, drew the Rahu Bow, then filled it with his divine power. All of his power was cycled through it to converge onto the arrow, with Ning's heartforce included into the mix. The method of applying heartforce through [Houyi's Archery] was even superior to Ning's own self-developed methods; with Ning's current level heartforce, he could only sustain seven arrows at most.

"Go!"

TWANG!

Instantly, the world itself seemed to shake. A dazzling red light instantly tore through the skies, and as it did so it continuously drew in the surrounding natural energy of the world. This was the power of [Houyi's Archery]; it was a terrifying archery skill that could ravenously draw in the might of Heaven and Earth.

Although both [Houyi's Archery] and the [Starseizing Hand] were ranked as the top ten divine abilities to be created after Pangu established the universe...in raw power, [Houyi's Archery] surpassed the [Starseizing Hand]!

Rumble...

The giant black-white seal came crashing down, smashing through everything.

The fiery arrow shot through the skies like a blazing meteor.

BOOM!!!

The two collided. The area around them completely blew apart! The earth below was suddenly caved in; clearly, this was caused by the shockwave of the collision!

"Eh?" Immortal Gaudy's face changed slightly. Very, very few people in the Three Realms used [Houyi's Archery]. For example, although there were a number of people under Patriarch Subhuti who did

train in it, their primary skills lay in other areas; they normally wouldn't use [Houyi's Archery]. Thus, there were very, very few people who were able to truly able to get a taste for how formidable [Houyi's Archery] was. Even Ji Ning had to first reach the third stage of heartforce and perfect his control over it before he was able to unleash [Houyi's Archery] to this level of power.

The collision with the arrow caused the giant black-white seal to instantly grow slower.

Twang! Ning once more nocked his arrow, drew his bow, and sent off a shot that blazed through the skies. Once more, this was a full-strength attack. Ning's heartforce was depleting at a terrifying pace, but he didn't dare allow the enemy's attack to draw near him. After all, this was an actual True Immortal. There were very few True Immortals who were merely at the 'base' level of power for a True Immortal; most were far more powerful.

Yet another blazing comet shot through the skies.

True Immortal Gaudy once more sent his giant black-white seal to crash downwards onto that arrow.

Twang! Twang! Twang! Twang! Twang!

Five more consecutive bowshots rang out, the power of the arrows preventing even the utterly enraged True Immortal Gaudy from immediately catching and slaughtering Ji Ning and his friends.

"Let's see how many more arrows you have!" True Immortal Gaudy had a terrifying look in his eyes. He knew that divine archers were generally only able to launch a very low number of full-power shots. And indeed, after the seventh arrow shot out, there was a pause. Now...there was nothing to block the infuriated True Immortal Gaudy.

The giant black-white seal once more began to crush through the opposing formations, smashing towards Ning and the others.

"Go!"

The whole reason why Ning had unleashed those seven shots was to buy time to allow Immortal Diancai, Yu Wei, and Celestial Immortal Unity to escape. However...when they attempted to use a Greater Teleportation, they realized that this region had been completely dimensionally severed from the surrounding world. There was no way to use any sort of teleportation here at all.

"None of you will be able to escape. All of you will die." True Immortal Gaudy was filled with a towering killing intent. His giant black-white seal once more came smashing downwards through the skies.

Chapter 12 – The Xia Emperor’s Attitude

“Senior Redsnow, this Pure Yang True Immortal is a master of the Grand Dao of Qiankun; I’d like to ask the seven of you to help out!” Ji Ning’s Primaltwin was frantically asking for succor. After learning that Ning was in danger, Redsnow and the rest of the seven had already left their world and come to the underwater estate. In truth, they hadn’t expected that Ning would need to use up their promise so soon.

In truth, when Ning had shot out seven arrows earlier, he had also used his Void-level energy to activate a Greater Teleportation Dao-seal; the amount of time he had bought himself was more than enough to activate it, but alas the teleport had failed.

There were many Grand Daos in the world...but who would’ve thought that he would just so happen to encounter a foe who had mastered the Grand Dao of Qiankun? In the face of someone like this, not even Greater Teleportation would be possible.

“Junior apprentice-brother.” Yu Wei looked towards Ning, worry on her face. Immortal Diancai and Celestial Immortal Unity were panicking as well, but there was nothing they could do.

“Die.” True Immortal Gaudy had a savage look on his face, and his eyes were filled with murder.

But right at this moment...

“Ji Ning, your savior just arrived.” The giant yellow bear’s voice suddenly echoed within Ning’s mind.

Rumble...

In the air between Ji Ning and True Immortal Gaudy, a black tunnel suddenly appeared out of nowhere. The black tunnel tore straight through space, allowing a man in black imperial robes to step out of it.

"The Xia Emperor?"

"His Imperial Majesty?"

Immortal Diancai, Yu Wei, and Celestial Immortal Unity all revealed looks of excitement and delight.

The man who had stepped out of the black tunnel was indeed the black-robed Xia Emperor. As the Xia Emperor walked out, he pointed with a single finger. A golden streak of light flew out, transforming into a golden dragon that knocked the giant black-white seal flying. He then gave the demonically enraged True Immortal Gaudy a cold glance. "Gaudy, you actually dare to come to my Grand Xia to cause trouble?"

Ning let out a sigh of relief.

"Sorry for bothering the seven of you just now." Within the underwater estate, the black-robed Ning was saluting respectfully.

The nearby giant yellow bear chortled. "Since the Xia Emperor has come out, there's no need to trouble the seven of you to intervene."

"...Does this count as us fulfilling our promise?" The beautiful Empyrean God Snow Scorpion asked teasingly.

"No, of course not!" Ning said frantically.

Seeing the look on Ning's face, the seven Empyrean Gods roared with laughter.

"Ahaha..."

"Relax, we're not going to quibble with you!"

Still...Empyrean God RedSnow quickly turned solemn. "However, Ji Ning, I have to warn you; previously, while you were in the Primordial Ruinworld region, your master, Patriarch Subhuti, didn't have to worry too much about personally intervening on your behalf. But

now that we are back in the Three Realms...in the face of such a powerful foe, even Patriarch Subhuti might have misgivings. In fact, even if he does intervene, he might not be able to rescue you."

"I understand." Ning nodded. He naturally understood that in the face of this storm, even his master was treading on thin ice.

"In addition...your master can't have the [Dream of the Three Realms] active at all times. Even if you are in danger, he might not know about it," Redsnow added.

Ning nodded.

It was true.

His master hadn't given Ning a talisman; even if Ning was in a dangerous situation, there was no way for him to notify his master.

"We promised to help you once...but it really will be only once," Empyrean God Redsnow said. "Your master, in turn...well, distant waters cannot be used to put out a nearby fire. Just look; you've only been back for a short while, but you've already encountered such a dangerous situation. You should understand, now...how careful you truly must be in the face of this storm."

Ning nodded. "Since I was able to survive and return even after being covered by karmic sinflames...the Seamless Gate is undoubtedly paying very close attention to me. They have long ago decided that I am a major foe for them. In the face of this storm...to tell the truth, I came to understand something. Since there's no longer any way for me to hide my sharpness, then I might as well reveal myself. I'll make it so that more experts notice me and feel that I am worthy of their help!"

"Although the Seamless Gate is brash, they remain hidden in the darkness; this means that they still have worries of their own. There are many experts on the side of my master as well." Ning laughed, "As long as enough of us work together, there's nothing for us to

worry about."

"You're finally using your head." Redsnow said with a laugh, "If you have enough helpers, then you won't even need the seven of us to assist you; you'll still be able to survive this storm."

.....

Outside the underwater estate.

Once the black-robed Xia Emperor appeared, True Immortal Gaudy grew even angrier. "Xiamang, are you going to stop me? Are you going to become my enemy?"

"By the looks of it, you joined the Seamless Gate long ago. Since we are in different camps...we already are enemies." The black-robed Xia Emperor said calmly, "As I see it...you need to f*ck off right now. Get the f*ck out of my Grand Xia." Although he held an absolute advantage in terms of power, the Xia Emperor knew that this foe was a master of the Grand Dao of Qiankun who possessed many powerful escaping techniques.

True Immortal Gaudy took a deep breath. He didn't want to make an enemy out of the Xia Emperor; after all, the Xia Emperor was an astonishing figure with tremendously powerful backers. The Xia Emperor possessed multiple powerful Protocosmic spirit-treasures and was extremely famous. Just now, he, Gaudy, had clearly severed this region from the surrounding dimension...but the Xia Emperor had forcibly torn through space and come through anyways. This was an ability that was similar to the power of the Worldhold Pagoda. To be able to ignore a spatial severing and forcibly tear a path to this place...clearly, the Xia Emperor had just used one of his Protocosmic spirit-treasures, the 'Brightheart Lamp of One Thought'.

"All I want to do is kill that youth." True Immortal Gaudy said coldly, "I can spare the other three!"

The Xia Emperor gave him a glance. "Get the f*ck out of my Grand

Xia...IMMEDIATELY."

Was this a joke? The whole reason he had come here was to protect Ji Ning.

"You...!" True Immortal Gaudy was furious. "Xiamang, today, I'm going to see for myself how powerful the descendants of the Primordial Imperial Clan like you are!" Instantly, a series of golden chains appeared around him. A total of nine golden chains appeared in total. One end of the chains seemed to sink off into the void of space, while the other wildly swept towards the Xia Emperor in a frenzied assault.

This was his true battle technique, a quiet, stealthy, insidious assault.

As for that giant black-white seal? It was faster to use the seal in attacking, and it was also more overbearing and dominating. He had wanted to just use it to smash open the protective formation and instantly crush Ning's group.

"You dare put on a show in front of me with techniques like this?" The black-robed Xia Emperor let out a cold laugh. An enormous snow-white lotus appeared beneath his feet, blooming in every direction. It completely took over the surrounding area, blocking the nine insidious golden chains.

"Annihilate." The Xia Emperor called this word out softly.

Last time, he had only unleashed a single golden stream of light. This time, three golden streams of light emerged, tearing through space and transforming into three golden roving dragons. These three golden dragons each had different auras; one of them seemed proud and brash, the second seemed sinister and cold, while the third seemed kind and gentle, as though it wasn't a threat to anyone.

These three golden auras, each bearing a different aura, caused the distant True Immortal Gaudy to reveal a look of rage on his face.

"From life to death, all dreams vanish...everything is nothing but a garish, gaudy show!"

True Immortal Gaudy coldly barked out these words. Instantly, those nine golden chains around him began to weave about and dance. Space itself began to tremble and ripple like water.

Hiss....

The three golden dragons now noticeably found it much harder to fly after entering that region.

"Hmph." The distant black-robed Xia Emperor's face turned grim. He waved his hand, and a small clock appeared. As soon as this little black clock appeared...

Doooooong!

A crisp sound rang out.

BOOM!

True Immortal Gaudy immediately vomited out a mouthful of fresh blood. Gritting his teeth, he said, "Excellent. Excellent. Excellent! Xiamang, since you are determined to protect this kid, then from this day forward, we shall be irreconcilable enemies!"

"Just you?" The Xia Emperor smirked in a very disdainful manner.

"Wait and see. This brat will die. He definitely will die!" Savage madness was in True Immortal Gaudy's eyes.

Whoosh.

True Immortal Gaudy immediately used a fleeing technique. It was simply too hard to block someone who had mastered the Grand Dao of Qiankun from fleeing.

Even the Xia Emperor was only able to stand there and watch as he fled.

"Thank you, your Imperial Majesty." Celestial Immortal Unity, Immortal Diancai, Yu Wei, and Ji Ning both flew over and hurriedly expressed thanks.

The Xia Emperor turned. He glanced at Ning and the other three, then said with a smile, "Good to see you are unharmed. Just now, I was watching the battle here through a magic treasure. When I saw Gaudy appear, I had a bad feeling. I was planning to Greater Teleport here, but who would've thought that he'd actually dimensionally sever this region off from the surrounding world? There was no way to teleport in at all! I had to forcibly tear a tunnel through space to come here. Fortunately, I made it in time. If I was just slightly slower..."

Ning and the others Ning now understood why the Xia Emperor had only managed to make it here at the last moment. Things had gotten to the point where Ning had already asked the seven Empyrean Gods to help out!

Thankfully...he hadn't had to waste that promise.

"Ji Ning, you have to be careful," the Xia Emperor said. "Although I don't why True Immortal Gaudy wanted to kill you that badly, I imagine that one of those Celestial Immortals you killed had a very close relationship with him. That's why True Immortal Gaudy, normally so graceful and refined, went so berserk. If a Pure Yang True Immortal who has mastered the Grand Dao of Qiankun wishes to kill you...it's going to be quite dangerous."

"I understand," Ning said solemnly.

"However...the storm is about to hit. Compared to the storm, this level of danger is nothing." The Xia Emperor continued, "The incoming tempest is growing increasingly terrifying. Here is my talisman; if you encounter any danger, just shatter it. As long as it isn't a True God or a Daofather, I'm confident in being able to save you."

The Xia Emperor, in terms of power, was slightly weaker than Lu Dongbin...but he had plenty of protective treasures, and so he would be able to stay alive even in the face of an assault by a True God or Daofather for a period of time.

"Thank you, your Imperial Majesty." Ning immediately accepted the talisman.

"Make your preparations." The Xia Emperor raised his head to look at the sky. "After this probing period...I imagine the war that is going to sweep the entire Grand Xia shall finally begin. If you choose to remain here, you won't be able to avoid it." After finishing his words, the Xia Emperor took a single step forward, disappearing with a void blink.

Ning looked at the talisman in his hand, revealing a slight smile.

As he had thought.

Although his earlier battle against nine Youngflame clan Celestial Immortals had been fairly impressive, in the eyes of the likes of the Xia Emperor or Daofather Crimsonbright, he was still nothing more than a fairly excellent genius of the Three Realms. This time, however, Ning had truly showed his fierceness. Even in the Primordial Era, he would be considered a true monster amongst the Void-level elites. Although this would cause his enemies to be more wary of him, it also made the Xia Emperor and Daofather Crimsonbright care more about him as well.

And now, he had the Xia Emperor's talisman in his hands, as well as the Xia Emperor's promise: "If you encounter any danger, just shatter it. As long as it isn't a True God or a Daofather, I'm confident in being able to save you." This had clearly spelled out the Xia Emperor's attitude towards him. It must be understood that not even Patriarch Subhuti had ever said something like this to Ning!

.....

The Fifth World.

Within a towering palace. The Gatemaster of the Seamless Gate, the Hallmaster of Bloodcloud Hall, and the Cavemaster of the Myriad Demons Cave were all present.

"AZUREFOX!"

An enraged bellow could be heard as True Immortal Gaudy charged in.

"Gaudy." The azure-robed woman looked at him.

"Azurefox, why didn't you intervene?! Just a moment...just one extra moment! That's all I needed to save little sister Violetgrass!" True Immortal Gaudy was utterly enraged.

The azure-robed woman just shook her head. "Violetgrass shattered the talismans that you and I gave her. You've mastered the Grand Dao of Qiankun, but I have not. Even if I did go, I would've been slower than you!"

True Immortal Gaudy paused. Right. In his rage, he had forgotten this.

"I'm going to kill that brat." A terrifying red light was glowing from True Immortal Gaudy's eyes as he said with rage, "I want him dead!"

Chapter 13 – Paying Respects To The Godking

"Ji Ning killed Violetgrass. I, too, want him dead." The azure-robed woman said calmly from atop her throne, "I'll arrange for you to have the chance you need to move against him. By relying on your mastery of Qiankun, I'm sure you'll be able to kill Ji Ning."

"Did you really think I'm as stupid as you seem to believe?" True Immortal Gaudy gave the azure-robed woman cold look. "The Xia Emperor moved to protect this brat; in fact, he even chose to ignore my threats. He clearly has made up his mind to protect the brat. This time, you sent many teams to attack many places throughout the entire world of the Grand Xia. Although the Xia Emperor has True Immortals and Celestial Immortals under his command, he had many places to worry about, and so he wasn't able to summon too much of his power to deal with me. But if I were to make another move...his forces wouldn't have to worry about defending his various commanderies. They'd probably join forces to trap me, then kill me!"

The Seamless Gate knew all along that the Xia Emperor had other Empyrean Gods or True Immortals by his side!

The Primordial Imperial Clan alone had sent three of them to follow the Xia Emperor. This was one of the reasons why the Xia Emperor's word was absolute law in the Grand Xia! The likes of Kindwater clan had Empyrean Gods in their ranks, and as a major clan that existed back in the Primordial Era, they too had True Gods or Daofathers backing them! And yet, they still did not dare to struggle with the Xia Emperor for supremacy. This was why!

Even the Youngflame clan had one of the major clans of the Primordial Era behind them. However, the Ancestor of the Youngflame clan, 'Youngflame Freak', had fled from his own clan and refused to recognize the connection between his clan and that primordial clan.

The supreme clans of the world of the Grand Xia truly were not easy

to deal with. If those countless clans joined together, not even the Xia Emperor would dare to try and suppress them all by force. He had to provide order for and benefits to everybody, sharing the world with them.

As for the Xiamang clan of the Xia Emperor...technically speaking, it was the most powerful clan in the entire world of the Grand Xia! They would be more than capable of annihilating a single True Immortal Gaudy.

"How can you possibly take revenge without taking on some risk?" The azure-robed woman said, "Can it be that you are giving up on vengeance for Violetgrass?"

A cold light flashed through True Immortal Gaudy's eyes. Of course he wanted to kill Ji Ning!

However...everyone capable of becoming a Pure Yang True Immortal was an extraordinary figure. None of them were fools.

"Violetgrass followed you this entire time. You are in control of the full power of the Seamless Gate. It would be much easier for you to kill Ji Ning than it would be for me," True Immortal Gaudy said coldly. "If you really do provide a good opportunity for me to act, I won't mind taking it. But I absolutely have no intentions of trading my life for that brat's."

After speaking, True Immortal Gaudy turned and left.

The only figures left within the towering hall were the azure-robed woman and the two other leaders. They all raised their heads, continuing to look at the battle images being transmitted in.

"The Xia Emperor really has begun to send out his forces," the azure-robed woman laughed.

"He naturally isn't going to just watch as you kill his people," the skinny elder said.

Time continued to pass.

The probing attacks of the two thousand teams were carried out lightning-fast. They began this night, and they quickly concluded as well.

The next day. The Golden Crow once more rose into the sky. It was as though nothing had happened.

However, in reality, the previous night the Seamless Gate had lost a total of sixty-nine Celestial Immortals and hundreds of Loose Immortals. The world of the Grand Xia had lost a total of seventy-three Celestial Immortals and dozens of Loose Immortals.

On a superficial level, the losses were equal. And in truth, this type of initial probing attack would always result in the attacker sustaining some casualties.

However, the biggest mistake the Seamless Gate made this time... occurred with Ji Ning! They had completely underestimated Ning's strength, causing them to lose eighteen supreme Celestial Immortals. This loss alone, in all honesty, was worse than all their other losses combined. After all, there was quite a large difference between an ordinary Celestial Immortal and a supreme Celestial Immortal.

But of course...neither the Xia Emperor nor the Seamless Gate were too concerned about their losses from this exchange.

This was just a probe, after all, an initial clash. Both sides suffered only some superficial losses; neither had sustained an actual injury. Their most powerful forces hadn't even moved! Only when the real war began would they begin to battle against each other. When that happened...Celestial Immortals would be put through a meat grinder, and even True Immortals and Empyrean Gods would fall if they were not cautious. This was, after all, the most powerful world under the command of Daofather Crimsonbright!

Within that towering palace in the Fifth World.

The leaders of the Seamless Gate, the Myriad Demons Cave, and Bloodcloud Hall had gathered here once more. After finalizing orders to their subordinates, they turned to the main topic of this meeting... Ji Ning.

"As I see it, Ji Ning has to die." The man in the fiery red robes spoke in a booming voice. "He's already a source of trouble for us. Once he overcomes his tribulation and becomes an Empyrean God...he won't just be a source of trouble. He might cause our entire campaign against the Grand Xia to fail."

The skinny elder sighed. "This person truly is too monstrous a genius, so monstrous that even I'm a bit frightened by him."

"I agree that we need to kill him," the azure-robed woman said. "This Ji Ning is protected by the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]; killing him won't be that easy. Our only choice is to first suppress and capture him, then come up with a way to kill him. But while we move to suppress him...I'm worried that his Daofather master will act."

"Daofather?"

The faces of the other two leaders changed.

True Gods, Daofathers...the true rulers of the Three Realms. In addition, someone who could teach the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] was definitely one of the most supreme of Daofathers. The mere thought of such a figure caused them to shudder.

"If we send Empyrean Gods and True Immortals to kill him, but they end up being killed by the Daofather when he saves Ji Ning...we'd end up having 'lost both the wife and the soldiers'¹, the worst of both worlds." The azure-robed woman sighed. "This is the most critical moment in our campaign against the Grand Xia. It's not wise for us to act on too large a scale."

"Azurefox, what do you think we should do?"

The other two both looked at her.

In terms of status, the three were equal. However, generally speaking the ones in charge of the Seamless Gate were more intelligent, which is why the Gatemaster was the one chosen for the subjugation of the major worlds, with the other two acting in a supporting role. If there were any internal squabbles, a report would be made to the higher-ups!

"I think...we should report to this to the Godking!" The azure-robed woman said solemnly.

"The Godking?" The other two hesitated.

The red-robed man said with hesitating, "To bother the Godking for something like this...? To ask the Godking for help?"

"Although we can kill Ji Ning if we are willing to pay a high price...the paying of that price would have an impact on our ability to conduct the war against the Grand Xia." The azure-robed woman said, "Our only choice is to report this to the Godking."

"Mm."

"Fine."

The other two didn't oppose this proposal. In truth, Azurefox could've made the report on her own; she was just letting them know as a form of respect. That way, the three would work together in greater harmony; the Myriad Demons Cave and the Bloodcloud Hall were extremely powerful as well, after all.

.....

Within a silent room.

The azure-robed woman let a stick of incense. Instantly, the fragrance of the incense filled the entire room. The azure-robed

woman slowly closed her eyes, sinking into a deep slumber.

Within a dream.

Azurefox appeared within a vast, dark region. At the center of this region, a massive throne that was more than thirty thousand meters long hovered in the air.

"Godking," Azurefox called out reverently.

Instantly, a towering figure suddenly appeared atop the massive, levitating throne. This figure was dressed in black robes, but his eyes were like a mist that was able to commune with one's very soul. He stared downwards at Azurefox, and she couldn't help but shudder.

"What is it?" The figure atop the massive throne lightly tapped the armrest with a finger. A booming sound instantly rang out, reverberating throughout the dark region.

"Godking, your subordinate is on the verge of launching the attack against the Grand Xia. However, a new variable has appeared within the Grand Xia world..." Azurefox explained respectfully, "This variable will have a major impact. If your subordinate was to use the power of the Seamless Gate against it...it might negatively impact our mission of subjugating the Grand Xia. Thus, I've come to ask you, Godking, to decide for us."

"Variable?" The titanic figure once more tapped the armrest.

"It's Ji Ning," Azurefox said respectfully.

"Him?" The towering figure hesitated momentarily. "He just killed eighteen of your Celestial Immortals. Mmm...from what happened in that battle, it can be said that this Ji Ning truly is quite a monster. He's actually become so powerful despite being at the Void-level. There's no way he could've accomplished this just through divine abilities. His sword-fingers...he hasn't even mastered the Grand Dao of the Sword...which means he must have mastered some sort of supremely powerful energy. Swordforce? From the looks of that

battle, he's only reached the first stage of swordforce. It must be some other type of invisible power...heartforce? Taiji-force? Infiniforce? Spaceforce?"

The towering figure pondered for a moment. "Your warning is a good one. I hadn't noticed that such a monster had appeared within the Grand Xia. By the looks of it...he has at least a 50% chance of overcoming his tribulation and becoming an Empyrean God! If he becomes an Empyrean God, he'll immediately become one of the most supreme of Empyrean Gods. In fact, if he's given a little time, he'll be able to reach Lu Dongbin's level. He is indeed a potential source of trouble."

The supreme powers of the Three Realms had a tacit understanding; if you didn't intervene, then I won't either.

This was an unspoken agreement.

Both sides were preparing...preparing to unleash everything at the critical moment of the war, to fully suppress and crush their foes! Prior to this, at most the Empyrean Gods and True Immortals would battle against each other. The True Gods and the Daofathers would not casually intervene. Thus...a supremely powerful Empyrean God could have an enormous impact. In addition, such an Empyrean God would have a good chance of making yet another breakthrough to become a True God!

"However...this Ji Ning's master is that old bastard, Subhuti. He's not easy to deal with," the towering figure said.

"Patriarch Subhuti?" Azurefox cried out in shock. Good heavens...

Patriarch Subhuti?!

Although she knew that Ji Ning had to have a very powerful Daofather behind him, given that he had been taught the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art]...she had never imagined that it would be that old freak Subhuti.

"Not even I can tell exactly how powerful that old fellow is. During that war that shattered Pangu's World, he intervened to save some people, but he didn't truly participate. Still...he definitely is one of the absolute most powerful Daofathers of the Three Realms. And...he has multiple Daofathers amongst his disciples!" The towering figure once more gently tapped at the armrest. Dong! Dong! Dong! Slow, deep thudding sounds echoed throughout the dark region.

Azurefox couldn't breathe.

Multiple Daofathers?

She knew some secrets, such as the fact that the mysterious 'senior disciple' under Patriarch Subhuti's command was definitely on the level of a True God or Daofather. As for the others, she didn't know about them. But from what the Godking was saying...Patriarch Subhuti actually had more than one Daofather under him! Still...even though she had learned this, she wouldn't dare to let this information slip. She was completely devoted to the Godking, while the Godking was all-knowing...

If she dared to betray him in any way at all, the Godking would know right away! For example, that battle against Ji Ning; with but a thought, the Godking immediately had become aware of what had happened during it.

"Still...that old fellow stands on the side of Nuwa!" The towering figure's misty gaze seemed to be as deep and vast as the infinite Void. "So we might as well take this chance to kill one of his disciples and test his reaction."

Azurefox listened attentively.

"Activate chess piece...Yu Wei." The towering figure said, "Have Yu Wei lead Ji Ning in a Greater Teleport to come straight to the Fifth World. The Fifth World is one of our major bases, and I'll personally station myself within it. In the Fifth World...even if Subhuti comes in person, there will be nothing he can do."

"Yu Wei?" Azurefox was startled.

They had quite a few chess pieces positioned within the world of the Grand Xia. Prior to this, Yu Wei hadn't been an important one, but after taking Patriarch Lu as her master and becoming a Celestial Immortal, she had immediately become their most important piece. Logically speaking, she could've been used to great effect in the future...but they were now going to use her against Ji Ning. Clearly, in the eyes of the Godking...trading Yu Wei for Ji Ning's life was worth it!

"Yes," Azurefox said respectfully. She then vanished into thin air.

Within the darkness, only the massive levitating throne and the towering figure atop it were left. His left hand continued to gently tap against the armrest of the throne. "Subhuti...I haven't actually fought you yet...I'm really rather looking forward to it..."

This idiom comes from a famous story of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms. A general tried to honeytrap his enemy by offering his sister in marriage...but his sister actually fell in love with the enemy and ran off with him. Furious, the general sent soldiers to chase them back, but the soldiers ended up being ambushed and slaughtered. Thus the phrase, 'losing both the wife and the soldiers', became immortalized for describing a situation where you pay enormous, multiple costs without getting what you want. ↵

Chapter 14 – A Successful Plot

The Fifth World. Within a quiet room, filled with the fragrance of incense. The azure-robed woman opened her eyes, awakening.

“The Godking is actually willing to use up the ‘Yu Wei’ chess piece.” Azurefox mentally sighed to herself. She immediately tried to reach out, only to frown: “Eh? Yu Wei isn’t sleeping yet?”

The various chess pieces had all been given an order that unless they were in the middle of a life-and-death situation, they had to sleep at least once every three days.

Only when they were asleep could these chess pieces be stealthily contacted! This form of communication was extremely mysterious; not even True Gods or Daofathers were able to detect it. There was a chance for every other form of communication to be detected, and upon being detected, the chess pieces would no longer be able to continue to hide themselves.

“Not sleeping...”

Azurefox pondered for a moment. “No rush. She has to sleep once within these three days. Heh...I imagine that there is no way Ji Ning will be able to defend against a plot by his Dao-companion. If he’s teleported straight to the Fifth World, he’s dead. And hrm...”

Azurefox’s eyes suddenly lit up! “Before Ji Ning dies...there’s a use for him.” Azurefox laughed. “Maybe we can use him to ensure that the Youngflame clan irrevocably throws their support to the Seamless Gate.”

.....

That very night.

Within the territory controlled by the Youngflame clan. Patriarch Arcanum was meeting with a golden-robed envoy at the peak of a

tall, nameless mountain.

"Greetings to you, Envoy." Celestial Immortal Arcanum was extremely courteous.

"Give this to your Ancestor." The golden-robed envoy handed over a scroll.

"This is..." Arcanum was puzzled.

"This scroll contains a scryer recording within it. Once your Ancestor views it, he'll understand." The golden-robed envoy laughed. "Our Seamless Gate is doing this to help your Youngflame clan. Don't end up being wiped out without even knowing what's going on."

After speaking, the golden-robed envoy immediately disappeared through teleportation.

Arcanum held the scroll, a frown on his face. After humming for a moment, he immediately opened it to take a look first. The unfurled scroll revealed an image; it was indeed a scryer recording. Arcanum filled it with his Immortal energy, and the images instantly began to move. It was the scene of the eighteen Celestial Immortals battling Celestial Immortal Unity, as well as the scene of them being slain by Ji Ning.

"Is that...Celestial Immortal Violetgrass?" Arcanum immediately recognized Violetgrass, whom he had spoken with before a few times.

"Those eighteen Celestial Immortals are so powerful. They were actually able to suppress Unity. Unity is going to die."

"What?!"

Upon seeing Ji Ning strike, Arcanum was instantly, completely stunned.

Good heavens...

But...but...

Ji Ning was far more powerful than he had been during their last battle at the Oldjade mountain range. Most likely, if all of the Celestial Immortals of the Youngflame clan were to join forces, they still wouldn't be able to withstand Ji Ning again. Arcanum knew exactly how deep the feud was between his clan and Ji Ning. Terrified, he immediately teleported back in a hurry.

.....

Within the Worldhold Pagoda.

"What is it?" The Youngflame Ancestor emerged from an illusory space, two other Celestial Immortals following him.

"Ancestor." The other four Celestial Immortals within the Worldhold Pagoda were incomparably respectful to him.

The seven Celestial Immortals of the Youngflame clan were all gathered together here!

"Ancestor, the Seamless Gate sent this to us. Take a look." Arcanum handed over the scroll, a serious look on his face.

"The Seamless Gate never comes to our Youngflame clan with good news." The Youngflame Ancestor, Immortal Venomfreak, let out a cold laugh. He immediately unfurled the scroll, then let out a chuckle. "Oh, a scryer recording. Let me see what they are up to now."

He filled it with his Immortal energy, and instantly the scenes of that battle began to replay.

Eighteen Celestial Immortals struck out in unison, suppressing Unity. Ji Ning attacked, True Immortal Gaudy appeared, the Xia Emperor appeared and defeated Gaudy...everything was included!

At first, Immortal Venomfreak just watched with a half-smirk on his

face, but his face quickly began to change, becoming increasingly ugly to behold.

"So things really have come to this."

Immortal Venomfreak's pupils contracted slightly, his face turning as cold as ice.

The other six Celestial Immortals present all looked towards Immortal Venomfreak, awaiting his orders.

"I had thought that the Xia Emperor would only stand behind Ji Ning after he overcame his tribulation to become an Empyrean God. I didn't imagine...that even before becoming an Empyrean God, he would become such a monster. If I was the Xia Emperor, I would stand behind Ji Ning as well." Immortal Venomfreak had a dark look on his face.

"Ancestor, what should we do?"

"If Ji Ning comes...we can't stop him."

"Ancestor."

They all looked towards their Ancestor, waiting for his orders.

The Ancestor was someone who had roamed the world back in the era of Pangu's World, after all. Even many Empyrean Gods and True Immortals felt he was a pain to deal with.

"Ji Ning won't launch a war against the Youngflame clan in the immediate future." Immortal Venomfreak continued, "That's because he was hurt from our last clash. He knows very well that I have many clones, and that if he isn't able to wipe them all out, I'll continue to harass him, becoming a nightmare for his clan." Immortal Venomfreak's eyes flashed with a savage light.

He was a sinister, insidious figure; he always had been.

"So we're just going to ignore this?" Patriarch Deadwood frowned.

"You stupid blockhead," Immortal Venomfreak snapped, "Didn't you see how astonishingly fast Ji Ning grows in power? He's already so powerful at the Void-level! I roamed the primordial world and have seen many things...but I've never seen a monster like him before! In the Primordial Era, only some of the most legendary of monsters might be comparable to him. A monster like him...if he continues to grow like this, he'll definitely be given incredible power within the Crimsonbright League. In the end, in the future, even I might be unable to escape his reach...and once I die, the annihilation of the Youngflame clan will be set in stone. We won't even have a chance to fight back."

Celestial Immortal Infatuation and the others all nodded.

"Let me think about this. Let me think." Immortal Venomfreak's eyes narrowed. "I really didn't expect it to come to this."

He was a very cautious man. It was precisely because he was cautious, insidious, and crafty that he had been able to survive for so long despite having offended so many.

The other six Celestial Immortals all waited quietly.

"Make the arrangements right away for all the mortals of our Youngflame clan to be moved into the world within the Worldhold Pagoda." Suddenly, Immortal Venomfreak began to give orders. "Trees die when uprooted, but people can survive. If push comes to shove...we flee!"

His greatest strength had always been fleeing!

"Evacuate all of them?" The six Celestial Immortals were amazed.

"All of them." Immortal Venomfreak immediately ordered, "You have to be fast, as fast as possible. I want you to complete this within the time needed to boil a kettle of tea. If you don't have enough time...it's fine if you end up missing or discarding some of the mortals."

"Alright." The six Celestial Immortals all assented hurriedly.

The Worldhold Pagoda was a Protocosmic spirit-treasure with an entire world within it. Although it wasn't as vast as the major world within Ning's Starseizing Manor, it wasn't small either. It would be easy to contain thirty billion people within it.

.....

The Celestial Immortals gave the orders, and the Loose Immortals handled things personally.

Although all those who had lived in the Oldjade mountain range had been wiped out, after Ji Ning had been exiled to the Nihilum Zone, the Youngflame clan had moved billions of more clansmen back to Oldjade.

The Loose Immortals moved with incredible speed. The Youngflame clan had nearly a thousand Loose Immortals and Earth Immortals under their command, and they all moved in unison. Within the time needed to boil a kettle of tea, they really did evacuate all of the clansmen from their three headquarters, moving them into the Worldhold Pagoda.

The seven Celestial Immortals of the Worldhold Pagoda stared at the vast land outside.

This was their fiefdom. They had fought for this land, had bled for it.

"Let's go. We'll have greater fiefs in the future, and our Youngflame clan will only grow stronger." Immortal Venomfreak flew out of the tower. Waving his hand, he collected the Worldhold Pagoda, then disappeared into thin air.

.....

That very night.

The imperial capital of the Grand Xia. The Skylight Palace.

"Your Imperial Majesty, Immortal Venomfreak asks for an audience," a white-faced elder said respectfully.

The Xia Emperor lifted an eyebrow, a pensive look in his eyes. He then said, "Let him come."

"Yes." The white-faced elder immediately departed.

"He came quite quickly...it seems the Seamless Gate is once more trying to seduce him." The Xia Emperor mused to himself, "When used correctly, Youngflame Freak is a sharp weapon as well. However...when you harm others, you harm yourself as well. He goes berserk too easily." The Xia Emperor knew very well that madness was bred into the bones of Immortal Venomfreak; this was why the Xia Emperor had used his clan and fiefs to tie Immortal Venomfreak down, giving Venomfreak something to care about and thus a way to use him!

And how, by the look of it...

"Although Immortal Venomfreak is useful...he can't compare to Ji Ning." The Xia Emperor shook his head. "It seems I'm about to lose one of my sharp weapons."

An ugly, horned individual walked in from outside.

"Your Imperial Majesty." The horned man was unusually respectful.

"Venomfreak." The Xia Emperor smiled.

The horned man said respectfully, "The Seamless Gate has been asking me to join them this entire time, but I never have. Just now, they sent me a scroll with a scryer recording within it, a recording of Ji Ning battling and slaying eighteen Celestial Immortals. After seeing it...I understand that Ji Ning is now extremely powerful. I want to resolve my differences with him, with the two of us swearing oaths to the Dao of the Heavens. Can we do this?"

"Resolve your differences?" The Xia Emperor shook his head. "When Ji

Ning was weak, he still wanted to fight against you. Now that he is stronger than you...how could he possibly be willing to accept peace?"

"Your Imperial Majesty...are you going to stand with him?" The horned man said in a low voice.

"If you go to kill him, I won't stop you. If he goes to kill you, I won't stop him either," the Xia Emperor said.

The horned man laughed coldly. "How could I possibly go kill him? Your Imperial Majesty...it seems you've already made your choice. I already suspected it before I came here...but I was holding on to a final strand of hope!"

"Venomfreak, you are very intelligent...but I urge you not to join the Seamless Gate. If you join the Seamless Gate...you will have made an enemy out of not just myself and Daofather Crimsonbright, but also my entire Primordial Imperial Clan and many other True Gods and Daofathers." The Xia Emperor continued, "You can leave now. I hope that you will be able to survive this great storm."

"I'm untalented in other respects, but I'm skilled in survival." The horned man chuckled. "By not killing me, your Imperial Majesty, you let me preserve an extra clone."

And then, chuckling, he departed.

The Xia Emperor watched him leave. This clone of Youngflame Freak definitely wasn't even carrying a slightly decent treasure on him; he had come prepared to die. The only reason he had come here today was to lay all his cards out on the table...but alas, the Xia Emperor stood immovably by the side of Ji Ning. The Xia Emperor couldn't even be bothered to try to lie to him about this, because he knew that Immortal Venomfreak was so sly and crafty that there was no way to deceive him.

"The Seamless Gate...they truly are seamless in their actions. There

is no seam they won't penetrate through." The Xia Emperor shook his head. "Just like that, they deprived me of one of my sharp weapons."

.....

Quietly, without any sound or noise, the Youngflame clan vanished from the world of the Grand Xia.

The Fifth World.

Within a towering palace.

"Immortal Venomfreak. I've long heard of your illustrious name." An azure-robed woman was seated on her throne within the palace.

"Gatemaster of the Seamless Gate...the countless marquises within the world of the Great Xia who hear your name all tremble." The horned man smiled. Although the Xia Emperor had urged him against this, he knew that to survive this storm, one had to be on a team. If he didn't have one...then he would probably become a target for both sides.

Since that was the case...he might as well join the other side right now, and even assume a position of importance!

"Go get some rest, Immortal Venomfreak. When the time comes for our battle against the Grand Xia, you will have ample opportunity to display your might," the azure-robed woman laughed.

"Then I'll await your orders, Gatekeeper." The horned man rose to his feet, then smiled and departed.

The azure-robed woman smiled as well.

She had just acquired a ferocious general!

"Hm." The azure-robed woman mentally reached out for a moment. "Yu Wei...has finally fallen asleep." She immediately headed towards her private room, planning to meet Yu Wei in her dreams.

Chapter 15 – Let's Have A Baby

Within a private room.

The azure-robed woman lit a stick of incense. She was in a superb mood due to Youngflame Freak throwing his support to her side, and so it took a while for her to completely fall asleep.

.....

Within her dreams.

This was a wide, vast prairie. A black-robed maiden materialized out of nowhere within it.

"Eh? Why have..." Yu Wei's face changed. She immediately understood that she had been guided to this place. As she swept it with her gaze, she saw the distant azure-robed woman walking towards her.

"My respectful greetings to you, Envoy," Yu Wei immediately said respectfully.

"Yu Wei, long time no see." The azure-robed woman smiled. "Your last mission was completed perfectly. We have another mission for you now."

Yu Wei's heart clenched.

Her last mission...had been the capture of Celestial Immortal Hunchmont. However, it hadn't been for her to carry out the actual capturing; all she had to do was help out a bit to make it happen! That had been quite a simple mission; Yu Wei had done only a few things, and there was no chance of her status being revealed.

"Please instruct me, Envoy," Yu Wei said respectfully.

"The mission is related to your Dao-companion, Ji Ning." The azure-robed woman carefully scrutinized Yu Wei for her reaction.

Yu Wei's heart clenched yet again, but she didn't ask anything.

"The Godking commands," the azure-robed woman said, "For you to bring Ji Ning straight to the Fifth World through Greater Teleportation."

"I've never been to the Fifth World before," Yu Wei said hurriedly.

"The Godking has long ago informed you all of the locations of the three thousand major worlds. There's no need for you to teleport to a specific location; any place within the Fifth World will do," the azure-robed woman said. "This will be very simple for you."

Yu Wei was silent.

She could do this, of course; the Godking had given her this order, precisely because it would be very easy for her to accomplish.

But...

She wasn't willing to do it!

Even if she had to die, she wouldn't do it!

"What are you going to do?" Yu Wei asked.

"That isn't for you to worry about," the azure-robed woman snapped. "Does the Godking need to explain his orders to you?"

"I can't do it." Yu Wei shook her head. Her voice was soft, but it was very resolute.

"Why can't you do it? You are Ji Ning's Dao-companion; he trusts you absolutely. All you have to do is say to him, 'I'm going to take you somewhere; once you get there, you'll understand.' A very simple phrase; Ji Ning won't suspect a thing. Lead him in a Greater Teleportation and go to the Fifth World...and your mission will be completed," the azure-robed woman said.

Yu Wei immediately said, "I've become apprenticed to Patriarch Lu. In

the future, I'll have a chance to infiltrate the very core of the Daoist Path. If I take Ji Ning to the Fifth World, I'll be exposed!"

"Once you are exposed, you won't have to hide any longer. You can openly and honorably serve the Godking." The azure-robed woman's gaze turned cold. "You've said a few too many things today. On account of the fact that the target is your Dao-companion, I'll pardon your impudence this once, but I will not pardon it a second time."

Yu Wei gritted her teeth.

"He is my Dao-companion." Yu Wei looked at the azure-robed woman.

"I know." The azure-robed woman looked back at her.

"He's the most important person in the world to me." Yu Wei looked at her steadily. "More important than even my own life."

The azure-robed woman's gaze turned solemn. Frowning, she said, "Are you going to refuse?"

Yu Wei immediately knelt down, prostrating herself and pressing her forehead down to the ground with the utmost sincerity. "The Godking gave me a new life, and I am absolutely devoted to the Godking. He can ask me to destroy the Black-White College, to kill anyone in the entire world of the Grand Xia, and I won't hesitate. But Ji Ning is my Dao-companion. I won't harm him, not even if I have to die!"

"You actually dare to disobey the commands of the Godking?" The azure-robed woman was stunned. "You...you'll be sent into the Infinity Hells, never to be reborn again!"

Yu Wei just knelt there, not saying another word.

The azure-robed woman stared at Yu Wei. "You should know what will happen if you disobey the Godking. I'll give you one last chance..."

"Even if you ask me a hundred times, a thousand times...my answer remains the same." Yu Wei just knelt there.

"Then...wait to be brought into the Infinity Hells." The azure-robed woman waved her arm, then disappeared into thin air.

.....

Night.

Ji Ning and Yu Wei were sleeping together on their bed. Although Immortals had no need for slumber, it felt nice to sleep every so often, and it could release a bit of the stress one felt. Even the most powerful of Immortals would occasionally take a nap, and in fact some Immortals were so relaxed that they might sleep for ten thousand years each time.

Suddenly, Yu Wei's eyelids twitched slightly. She slowly opened her eyes.

"It's finally come."

Pain was in Yu Wei's eyes.

She had been terrified of this day coming. She had thought that, upon becoming Patriarch Lu's disciple, that she had become more useful and that the Godking wouldn't order her to expose herself, allowing her to be together with Ning for a longer period of time. But now, the Godking's order had come, after she had only spent half a year together with Ning.

Yu Wei gently pressed her head against Ning's chest, feeling the warmth coming from Ning's body.

"What is it?" Ning woke up as well. He reached out to put his arm around Yu Wei; he could sense that she seemed to be feeling quite weak and soft right now.

"Nothing. I had a bad dream," Yu Wei said softly.

Ning nodded gently.

He knew that Yu Wei had a tragic life in her past life, while in this life her parents had died when she was young. She had most likely dreamt of something unpleasant.

"It was just a dream. Life is just going to get better and better for us." Ning held Yu Wei in his arms.

"Right. Better and better." Yu Wei smiled.

.....

"Senior apprentice-sister, you seem to be in quite a good mood. You've been smiling all day long." Ning released his Darknorth swords. His slaughter of those Celestial Immortals had finally caused his three Darknorth swords to have absorbed enough baleful auras to become low-grade Pure Yang treasures.

Yu Wei put down her platter of spirit-fruit and smiled. "I'm with you, and there's no one to bother us. We're living in a lover's paradise right now; why can't I smile?"

Ning smiled as well.

Right.

A lover's paradise.

The only two people within this estate were himself and Yu Wei. Immortal Diancai was quite discrete; he didn't come bother them unless there was something important. This was a world that belonged to just the two of them; to refer to it as a 'lover's paradise' wasn't too far off the mark.

"Haha, it would be wonderful if we can always live such a relaxed, happy life. My most cherished dream is of living a peaceful, calm life with my loved ones until the end of time." A hint of nostalgia appeared in Ning's eyes. "My father and my mother have both left

me. But...I still have you, senior apprentice-sister."

"Right." Yu Wei nodded gently. In her heart, however, she silently said to herself: "Junior apprentice-brother, these might be our final days together. I want to leave you with the most perfect of memories. I'm going to smile, to laugh, to be happy."

.....

Within a dark region.

There was a towering, thirty thousand meter throne, and a massive black-robed figure seated upon it. He was gently tapping on his left armrest with his left arm.

Below him was Yu Wei, kneeling. Next to her was the azure-robed woman.

"You've disappointed me deeply." The Godking's voice echoed within the entire region of darkness.

Yu Wei didn't dare to say a single word in her own defense.

"However...I know that you feel very deep emotions towards this Ji Ning." The Godking sighed. "This word, 'love'...there have been countless who have been driven mad by it, even amongst Immortals and Fiends. I can forgive you this time, and I will no longer give you any missions pertaining to Ji Ning...but if you ever disobey me again, then you shall go burn for all eternity within the Infinity Hells."

"Thank you, Godking." Yu Wei revealed an excited look on her face, while the nearby azure-robed woman revealed a look of astonishment.

Yu Wei had never imagined that she was going to survive this disaster. After all, it was simplicity itself for the Godking to slay her. The Godking had imprinted her soul with his seal during her past life; with but a single thought, he could tear her soul out and cast it into the Infinity Hells. The Infinity Hells was an illusory place of

damnation which the Godking had constructed; souls cast into it would suffer endless torment which would never come to an end. In fact...with but a single thought, the Godking could shatter her soul and kill her.

And yet, she felt tremendous gratitude towards the Godking. It was the Godking who had bestowed new life upon her.

"Go then." The Godking waved his hand, and Yu Wei vanished.

"Godking." The azure-robed woman could no longer stay silent. She had followed the Godking for far too long; this was completely different from how the Godking usually did things.

"Even if we don't give her any missions related to Ji Ning, we can still use her to unknowingly send him on the road to hell," the Godking said. "In addition...this chess piece, Yu Wei, remains very useful to us. I'll pardon her impudence, this once."

The azure-robed woman's eyes gleamed. "The Godking is wise."

.....

Within a private room.

Yu Wei opened her eyes, unable to disguise the excitement within them.

"Junior apprentice-brother, junior apprentice-brother." Yu Wei immediately charged out of the still room, running towards the wide courtyard outside. Within the courtyard, Ning was training with his Darknorth swords. He wanted to master the Dao of the Sword as quickly as possible! He could sense that he was on the path to full master of the Dao; although his mastery of swordforce had only increased his combat power by a small amount, he was now gaining insight into the Dao of the Sword at a much faster pace.

"Eh?" Ning turned around, then laughed, "Senior apprentice-sister, I'm still training. Is there something you need?"

"Nothing." Yu Wei sat down, just staring at him.

She quickly recovered from her state of excitement. She also quickly understood that even though she didn't have to act against Ning, she would still have to carry out other missions against other people. In fact, due to her connection against Patriarch Lu, she would now be sent to deal with even more powerful figures. In short...sooner or later, she would still be revealed.

The day that she was revealed would be the day when she would be forced to leave Ji Ning...and in fact, might be the day of her death.

"That day will come, no matter what..." After this latest experience, Yu Wei became even more reluctant to part with him.

That very night.

Ning and Yu Wei were together in bed, sharing a pillow.

"Junior apprentice-brother." Yu Wei was in Ning's arms.

"Mm?" Ning looked at her.

"Let's have a baby," Yu Wei said suddenly.

"Have a baby? Why? The Three Realms are in a state of chaos; how can we possibly take care of a baby right now?" Ning was startled. He was a Fiendgod, while Yu Wei was a Celestial Immortal; it was very difficult for Immortals and Fiendgods to conceive, but much easier for them to prevent conception. All they had to do was use their elemental energy or their divine power to prevent it.

Yu Wei looked at him. "I want one. The Three Realms are in a state of chaos, as you said. This way, even if one of us ends up dying, we'll at least have a child together."

"How can you say such things?" Ning said.

"If you die, do you plan to leave me alone in this world?" Yu Wei

asked. "You've experienced so many dangerous events lately; I'm honestly terrified right now. If you were gone...I wouldn't be able to stay alive."

When Ning thought of how he had been exiled to the Nihilum Zone, his heart turned soft. He nodded. "Fine. If you want a baby, we'll have a baby. But I'm a Fiendgod, while you are a Celestial Immortal; it's going to be very hard for us to conceive."

"We still have to give it a try," Yu Wei said earnestly.

"Theeen...here I come!" Ning chortled, then gently pulled Yu Wei's gauzy clothes off of her.

It was a dark, dreamy night. Ning felt as though he was intoxicated by bliss...

.....

Whether it was due to sheer luck or whether it was because someone was looking out for them...on the third month of their attempts, Yu Wei, a Celestial Immortal, became pregnant by Ji Ning, a Fiendgod.

After becoming pregnant, Yu Wei spent every day just sitting there, stroking her belly, beaming as she watched Ning train with the sword. In truth, there was no swelling whatsoever in Yu Wei's belly at this point in time, but she still liked to stroke her belly...because she was caressing the child of herself and Ji Ning.

Ning completely immersed himself within swordplay, but whenever he paused, he would turn to beam merrily at Yu Wei.

Every time he did, he would feel very warm, very happy.

It had been so long...

Ever since his parents had passed on...it had been so long since he had felt such warmth. This was an intoxicating warmth, one which

filled him with vigor! In the future, after his child was born, the two of them would play with the baby together. Those days would be even more blissful, right?

"Eh?" Ning suddenly ceased his training.

"What is it?" Yu Wei, who had been eating some spirit-fruit, couldn't help but pause and query him.

"My Primaltwin has perfected its mastery over heartforce." An excited look was in Ning's eyes.

"Then...are you going to have your Primaltwin attempt the Celestial Tribulation?" Yu Wei was stunned.

Chapter 16 – The Enraged Celestial Immortal Blackheaven

Ji Ning nodded lightly. “It should be time to undergo the tribulation. However, prior to doing so...I want to make a trip back to Swallow Mountain. You can think of this as a way to calm myself prior to the tribulation. Honestly, as I see it...in my Celestial Tribulation, I expect the wind tribulation, fire tribulation, and thunder tribulations to be comparatively easy to deal with, while the demonheart tribulation will be the toughest.”

He had karmic sinflames covering him, after all; the demonheart tribulation would probably be truly terrifying.

“Alright.” Yu Wei was somewhat worried as well.

“Give Master a head’s up. We’re going back to Swallow Mountain today,” Ning said.

“Whatever you say,” Yu Wei said with a smile.

That very day, Ning and Yu Wei returned to Swallow Mountain.

.....

Swallow Mountain. Serpentwing Lake. Brightheart Island.

“Ah!? Master, you...you are actually having a baby with Rainbowflame? And you didn’t tell me?! You didn’t tell me something as important as this?! You’re breaking my heart! Wowowow!” Little Qing stared at Yu Wei’s belly, utterly excited. “Master, let your child be my disciple, alright?”

“You? Based on what? Don’t even think about leading that poor child astray.” The nearby Uncle White chortled merrily while seated. He was actually the happiest one of them all.

An heir!

Ji Ning had an heir!

If my big brother and my sister-in-law were still alive...I can't even imagine how happy they would be right now.

"Senior apprentice-brother, I insist on being godfather to your child." Mu Northson was similarly unable to disguise his joy and eagerness.

"Fine. However, as his godfather, you need to prepare some quality gifts. As a grandmaster of constructs...you absolutely have to bring out some particularly nice things." Ning laughed. Giving his junior apprentice-brother something to care about was a wonderful thing.

"Stop just chatting. Quick, all of you, sit."

The door swung open, and Autumn Leaf walked in carrying a platter of sumptuous foods.

Everyone was gathered here together, eating, drinking, and joking around.

Ning's heart grew increasingly calm, increasingly peaceful.

For some inexplicable reason, he wanted to come back before his Celestial Tribulation. Aside from meeting with these familiar faces...he wanted to see Serpentwing Lake.

.....

A boat was drifting about on the surface of Serpentwing Lake. Ji Ning lay within it, sleeping by himself.

Mist gathered in the area around him.

Eventually, Ning sat up. He stretched out with his hand, gently gliding it through the water beneath the boat. He said softly, "Father, Mother...when you were alive, you had always hoped that my name would be known throughout the world. And now...your child has accomplished it! In fact, your child's name is now known even in other major worlds. And now, in a few days, your child shall undergo the Celestial Tribulation."

"Your child swears this...I will definitely become a True God and a Daofather. I'll stand at the very peak of the Three Realms...and at that point in time, I'll see you again. I'll tell you all of these things in person. As for this tribulation...it's be nothing more a small wave before the great storm to come."

It was as though Ji Ning was engaging in idle banter with his family members. He just glided his hand through the water as he spoke. His voice, however, contained a decisiveness and an ambition that would cause the faces of those who heard it to change.

.....

A beautiful gorge, with many palaces built within it, as well as many flowers, trees, and other forms of vegetation. It was as beautiful as paradise.

Two supremely lovely Immortal maidens who were even more astonishingly beautiful than Yu Wei were walking through it, shoulder-by-shoulder.

One of them was dressed in green, while the other was dressed in gray.

The peerless fairy maiden dressed in gray sackcloth clothes was walking barefoot. The gray clothes covering her were completely unable to disguise her beauty; in fact, they gave her a spiritual aura that it seem as though she transcended the mortal world. Countless male Immortals and Fiends would go mad just looking at her. She was the leader of the Seven Female Immortals of the Hundred Tombs Mountain, 'Fairy Deadgrass'.

The Hundred Tombs Mountain, a place within the Heaven Realm where spiritual energy gathered in abundance. In the Primordial Era, it used to be a place where many of the most powerful deceased Fiendgods would be buried, which was why it was known as the 'Hundred Tombs Mountain'. However, because so many powerful Fiendgods had been buried there, the place had become even more

mysterious. Many flowers and trees had grown in that place, many of which possessed spiritual qualities. In fact, some of them spontaneously trained in cultivation!

It was incredibly difficult for flowers and plants to train in cultivation; since they all came from the Hundred Tombs Mountain, they were naturally an extremely unified group.

After they were able to take human form, they all appeared as women.

The Hundred Tombs Mountain had many Loose Immortals and Earth Immortals, as well as six Celestial Immortals and one Pure Yang True Immortal.

Of those maidens...Fairy Deadgrass was the Pure Yang True Immortal! She was originally a blade of grass that looked dry and withered, but that blade of grass was incredibly marvelous; no other flowers or types of vegetation were able to survive at all within a very large region around her. After taking human form as an Earth Immortal, she had been able to effortlessly overcome her Celestial Tribulation, becoming the number one Celestial Immortal of the Hundred Tombs Mountain. She was extremely reserved, and the more one interacted with her, the more intoxicated one would feel. In fact, even the Celestial Emperor of the Three Realms had been smitten by her. He had wanted to sneak in to court her, but who would've thought that upon entering the Hundred Tombs Mountain, the Celestial Emperor would have been physically kicked out, a single word echoing throughout the entire Heaven Realm:

"SCRAM!"

The Celestial Emperor had slunk away in disgrace.

After that, many in the Three Realms began to hypothesize that Fairy Deadgrass had to have a True God or Daofather behind her. However...given that Fairy Deadgrass was arguably one of the most peerless beauties of the entire Three Realms, it wasn't strange for

her to have attracted the attention of a True God or a Daofather.

"Elder sister." The green-robed fairy maiden's eyes glistened with tears. "Little sister Violetgrass died such a miserable death. She was just a little girl, but that 'Ji Ning' showed her no mercy at all. My husband went all-out to defend her, and even sent a mental message ordering him to stop...but Ji Ning still killed little sister Violetgrass. Elder sister...you have to take revenge for her!"

A cold light flashed through the eyes of Fairy Deadgrass. She said calmly, "We Seven Female Immortals of the Hundred Tombs Mountain...we aren't killed so easily. Who is this Ji Ning, and where does he come from? Your husband, True Immortal Gaudy, is quite powerful; could it be that even he was unable to kill him?"

"This Ji Ning is merely a Void-level Fiendgod; he hasn't even overcome his tribulation," the green-robed woman said. "However, he is extremely powerful; although he is merely a Void-level Fiendgod, he was able to block my husband for a period of time."

"He blocked Gaudy?" Fairy Deadgrass was startled.

There was a tremendous difference in power between Celestial Immortals and True Immortals. To block a True Immortal...only the rarest and most monstrously talented Celestial Immortals of the Three Realms were capable of such a thing.

"According to what my husband said, although he wanted to kill Ji Ning very much, Ji Ning's power has indeed reached the threshold of Empyrean Gods and True Immortals," the green-robed woman said. "In addition, the Xia Emperor of the Grand Xia insisted on protecting Ji Ning. And...a True God or Daofather master stands behind Ji Ning! Right; I forgot to tell you this, but this Ji Ning has trained in the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] as well."

Fairy Deadgrass' body stiffened.

"Understood." Fairy Deadgrass stood there pensively.

The green-robed fairy maiden stood next to her, waiting impatiently.

She knew very well that her elder sister was capable of many things; naturally, she was hoping that her elder sister would help out.

"Elder sister?" The green-robed fairy maiden called out softly.

"The Seven Female Immortals of the Hundred Tombs Mountain... Violetgrass was the youngest, and she had always followed you. I only met her a few times after she overcame her tribulation to become a Celestial Immortal. Although there isn't much of a relationship between us...no matter what, she came from our Hundred Tombs Mountain. If memory serves, after she left you, she went to follow Azurefox, right?" Fairy Deadgrass said.

"Right." The green-robed woman nodded.

"I'll go meet Azurefox tomorrow," Fairy Deadgrass said calmly.

There were many female Immortals in the Hundred Tombs Mountain, including a large group of Earth Immortals and Loose Immortals. Due to the Three Calamities and Nine Tribulations, most found it hard to live for more than a million years. Thus, the earliest ones who were born, such as Fairy Deadgrass, didn't have much of a connection to the latecomers; they only had close connections to the others who were also born early on. Violetgrass was one of the latecomers; she had first followed many powerful figures, but had actually been lucky enough to ecome a Celestial Immortal. If it weren't for that, Fairy Deadgrass probably wouldn't even remember who she was.

.....

The Fifth World.

Within that towering palace, the Gatemaster of the Seamless Gate, 'Azurefox', was accompanying her guest, Fairy Deadgrass.

"Little sister Deadgrass, I've already told you the full details to this

story." Gatemaster Azurefox shook her head. "To tell you the truth... our Seamless Gate wants to kill Ji Ning more badly than any of you do. If he doesn't die, then he will become a dangerous variable that will impact our plans to subjugate the Grand Xia. He already has the power to impact the situation right now, much less in the future when he grows more powerful. Thus, the earlier we kill him, the better. However, I haven't been able to find a good opportunity to do this. After all, he's very tough to kill, with the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] protecting him. And once we fail in killing him...the Immortals that we send to deal with him might end up being killed by the figure standing behind him."

Fairy Deadgrass frowned.

She was an incredibly proud figure...but there was no way she would blindly rush into danger.

"Azurefox."

An enraged bellow rang out, and a long-haired man came storming in with a terrifying look in his eyes.

"Blackheaven." Gatemaster Azurefox and Fairy Deadgrass both watched him enter. He was one of the marvels amongst the countless Celestial Immortals of the Three Realms, Celestial Immortal Blackheaven. From the Primordial Era to the current era, no one had ever been able to determine for sure exactly how powerful Celestial Immortal Blackheaven was. However, what they did find out suggested that he was most likely just as powerful as a supreme Celestial Immortal.

Still...when he engaged in fights, he often used many strange, heterodox techniques that caused even Empyrean Gods and True Immortals problems! For example, when True Immortal Gaudy had gone to kill Ji Ning, Ji Ning had been able to use his archery to block him. Celestial Immortal Blackheaven, however...he would've been able to rely on his heterodox techniques to escape. Thus, the Empyrean Gods and True Immortals of the Three Realms treated him

as they would an equal.

"Violetgrass DIED?! You, the 'exalted Gatemaster of the Seamless Gate'...why the hell didn't you help take care of her? Do you remember the words you told me, back then?!" Celestial Immortal Blackheaven was livid. He would never forget that little girl who had just started to take human form, and who had followed him around addressing him as 'old geezer'. He had always beamed merrily towards that little girl.

"I was unable to do anything. I couldn't make it in time." Gatemaster Azurefox shook her head.

"Damn." A cold light flashed through Blackheaven's eyes. "The Godking has three hundred Seamless Gates under his command. If you can't even protect one of your maids, do you really think you are worthy of being one of the Gatemasters?"

"Blackheaven, you go too far!" A dark, cold light flashed through Azurefox's eyes as well, and her azure hair began to float upwards.

"I go too far? You're the one who went too far by letting Violetgrass die. I taught her step-by-step, helping her establish her foundation, so that she could quickly become a Celestial Immortal, and a supreme one at that! I never imagined that...damn. You letting her take on missions was one thing, but you actually let her take on such a terrifyingly dangerous mission?" Blackheaven was truly enraged.

"That stupid kid...she didn't break the talisman I gave her." A hint of tears could be seen in Blackheaven's eyes, but the tears quickly vanished.

Celestial Immortal Blackheaven felt such regret.

He had roamed the Three Realms for his entire life, living in a carefree manner from the Primordial Era to the present day. He rarely came to truly care for someone, but he ended up treating that silly little girl who thought herself to be supremely clever as one of

his own children. Who would've thought that they would've ended up being parted by death so soon?

In truth, when Violetgrass had been at the verge of death, she had thought of Celestial Immortal Blackheaven.

Long ago, Blackheaven had pounded his own chest and boasted proudly, "If there's anything you need, come find me! I'll give you three promises to accomplish three tasks for you. No matter how major the task is, I'll be able to accomplish it."

"Keep bragging, old geezer. You are just a Celestial Immortal, and you claim to be able to accomplish anything, no matter how major?"

Blackheaven had just smiled, not taking her seriously.

But he had forgotten...that when Violetgrass was in a truly dangerous situation, such as when she had seen how powerful Ji Ning was, how would she possibly dare to break the talisman he had given her? She was afraid; afraid that Blackheaven would've thrown his life away as well. Thus, the two talismans she had shattered belonged to True Immortals.

"Hmph." Gatemaster Azurefox's gaze flashed past Celestial Immortal Blackheaven. She let out an angry snort, then said, "I made a mistake. I wasn't able to protect Violetgrass. This time...I'm not going to quibble with you over this." Gatemaster Azurefox was one of the most loyal followers of the Godking, and so she knew very well that of the powers on her side, Celestial Immortal Blackheaven, a mere Celestial Immortal, was behaving in a far too relaxed and unrestricted manner. This relaxed manner caused Gatemaster Azurefox to feel as though something was off. This was why she swallowed her anger, unwilling to truly make an enemy out of Blackheaven right now.

Chapter 17 – Ji Ning Requests An Audience

In all honesty, Gatemaster Azurefox couldn't be blamed for this matter. All the members of the Seamless Gate were risking their lives in their ventures; when the time came, even the Gatemaster herself would go into battle! This battle against Celestial Immortal Unity wasn't that dangerous a mission either; Violetgrass had only died due to bad luck. The Three Realms were being rocked by a storm; who would dare say for certain that one person would definitely survive?

However, Gatemaster Azurefox could tell that Celestial Immortal Blackheaven was truly enraged, and so she didn't bother to explain.

In addition...

Blackheaven was on their side. Logically speaking, as a Celestial Immortal, he should be forced to obey the orders that came from his superiors. Only major powers, those linked to major powers like Fairy Deadgrass, and the most supreme of Empyrean Gods and True Immortals were able to left alone to their own devices without being assigned any missions. Blackheaven, however, was also left alone and unburdened. This was truly quite strange, and this caused many of their Celestial Immortals to address him reverently as 'Exalted Immortal Blackheaven'. This also caused Gatemaster Azurefox to feel some nervousness. For an inexplicable reason, she felt as though if she were to truly go fight against Blackheaven, the results would be... poor.

"Blackheaven, don't blame Azurefox. She had no idea that Ji Ning was this much of a monster." The nearby Fairy Deadgrass sighed. "When I learned that Violetgrass had died, I immediately rushed over here. I imagine that you, too, came here for the purpose of getting vengeance for her, Blackheaven. Azurefox, as the Gatemaster of her Seamless Gate, wants to kill Ji Ning more than any of us. We all share a common goal, to kill Ji Ning."

"Ji Ning...of course we have to kill him," Blackheaven growled.

"Even if only for the sake of our subjugation of the Grand Xia alone, Ji Ning must die." Gatemaster Azurefox hurriedly agreed.

"How to kill him?" Blackheaven asked, "If he could be easily killed, Gaudy would've killed him long ago. He's currently within the world of the Grand Xia. That's the territory of the Xia Emperor. Both of you know exactly how deep the Xia Emperor's roots are..."

In truth, they didn't care as much about the Daofather behind Ji Ning. If they were truly worried, they wouldn't even dare to say the word 'kill'. The reason why they weren't afraid was because the Three Realms were now divided into two major opposing camps. These two camps had come to a common agreement; the major powers were not to casually intervene, because if they did, the other side would probably release even more and even more powerful major powers.

"The Xia Emperor's roots go deep. If we don't go all out against him... there's no way we'll have a chance to kill Ji Ning," Gatemaster Azurefox said. "The price of doing that, however, is too great. The best plan of action right now is to have the marquises of the Grand Xia assault the Xia Emperor first."

This was what the Seamless Gate usually did.

They would recruit some of the marquises, then use them to assault the other marquises. A full frontal assault...if the Seamless Gate truly had enough of an advantage to carry out such an assault, why would they have worked so furtively all these years? They would've forcibly swept through and conquered the Three Realms long ago. However... clearly, the Seamless Gate wasn't that powerful yet.

.....

Celestial Immortal Blackheaven, Gatemaster Azurefox, and Fairy Deadgrass couldn't come up with any ideas for acting against Ning.

Just as Blackheaven was about to turn and leave with a belly full of

fire...

"Eh?" Gatekeeper Azurefox suddenly rose to her feet.

Puzzled, Blackheaven gave her a glance.

Fairy Deadgrass was puzzled as well.

"Our chance just came." Azurefox revealed a smile as she looked towards Fairy Deadgrass and Blackheaven. "Our chance to kill Ji Ning just came."

"What?"

"What's the chance?" Fairy Deadgrass was puzzled, while Blackheaven immediately went to the point.

Azurefox smiled. "I just received word that Ji Ning is about to undergo his tribulation. It should be his Primaltwin that is going to undergo the Celestial Tribulation."

"Tribulation?" Fairy Deadgrass and Celestial Immortal Blackheaven were both surprised...and then both revealed looks of delight.

"This is indeed a wonderful opportunity." Fairy Deadgrass laughed as well. "Once his tribulation begins, especially when the final demonheart tribulation begins...since a Primaltwin shares the same memories and thoughts with the true body, the true body will also be trapped in the demonheart world. Ji Ning will be at his weakest; he won't be able to fight back at all."

"Right. He'll be unable to fight back, and the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] will be useless against the demonheart tribulation." Blackheaven revealed a look of delight.

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The azure-robed woman felt quite excited for this stroke of luck.

It was incredibly hard to subjugate a major world. One had to

remove multiple impediments, and Ji Ning had become one such impediment that she had to resolve.

That very day, True Immortal Gaudy, Fairy Deadgrass, Celestial Immortal Blackheaven, Immortal Venomfreak, and the three leaders of the Seamless Gate, the Myriad Demons Cave, and Bloodcloud Hall gathered together for a meeting.

"We'll primarily be relying on you this time, Exalted Immortals." Immortal Venomfreak had a very humble attitude, and his ingratiating smile caused his ugly face to look even more savage. "If there's anything you need me, Venomfreak, to carry out, just tell me. I'm prepared to give my life up over there if needed."

"Life?"

The others all chuckled. Immortal Venomfreak's 'life' was spent cheaply; he had already died countless times! There was no value in killing his clones.

"I'll bring six of my aberrations as well. I've been nurturing them since the Primordial Era, and they are amongst the most powerful of my children." Immortal Venomfreak had a delighted look on his face, and the other Immortals present all nodded and smiled. Immortal Venomfreak had many clones spread throughout the universe, and was quite famous within the Three Realms for his abilities in cultivating venomous bug-aberrations. All of them were thick and muscular, and could be used in many ways.

"When we go to the Grand Xia, we are all risking our lives," Fairy Deadgrass said. "I'm only going to have one of my incarnations to go."

"Right. I'll send an incarnation as well, and it'll carry some of my powerful magic treasures. It should have a tenth of my full power," True Immortal Gaudy said.

Celestial Immortal Blackheaven let out a cold snort.

However...even though he wanted to take revenge for Violetgrass

more than anyone else, he too was merely going to send a clone over. This was because his specialties lay in his varied, heterodox skills; it didn't make too much of a difference whether he sent his true body or if he sent his clone. However, when True Immortal Gaudy and Fairy Deadgrass sent over their incarnations, those incarnations would most likely only have at most a tenth of their full power, no matter how powerful those clones were.

Their incarnations and clones were created through Celestial Immortal techniques; if they died, it wouldn't impact their strength that much. Their true bodies, however, could not die; they would truly perish if their true bodies were slain.

Immortal Venomfreak was different. In truth, he didn't even really have a 'true body'; he had many clones, each of which could be considered his 'true body'. Thus, one had to wipe out all of his clones before he would die; otherwise, if so much as a single clone survived, he would be able to quickly recover.

"Our Seamless Gate shall send the clones of two Empyrean Gods as well," the azure-robed woman said.

"Our Bloodcloud Hall will send out a team of Hellsworn," the skinny elder said with a smile.

"I will provide a construct to that team of Hellsworn," the fire-robed man said.

The addition of these three organizations had caused the power of this team to increase significantly.

"Now...the only question is, where is Ji Ning undergoing his tribulation," Blackheaven mused softly.

"If he ends up running to the Daofather master behind him, there will be nothing we can do. Otherwise...even if though Xia Emperor is protecting him, during the tribulation itself Ji Ning will be helpless. We only need a short period of time to kill him when we attack."

Azurefox said confidently, "Celestial Immortal Blackheaven's Yin-Yang Arcane Ki Bottle' will be able to kill Ji Ning effortlessly."

Blackheaven nodded. "I'll bring the Yin-Yang Arcane Ki Bottle, of course."

The others couldn't help but give Blackheaven a glance.

Blackheaven really did have far too many treasures.

Some were Protocosmic spirit-treasures, while others were rather unique treasures with extraordinary powers. Once, Blackheaven had set up a trap that caused an Empyrean God of the Celestial Court to accidentally become ensnared within the Yin-Yang Arcane Ki Bottle. He had nearly died within that battle, and in the end had only survived because their respective major powers had negotiated, resulting in that Empyrean God being released.

.....

Night.

The imperial capital of the Grand Xia. The Skylight Palace.

"Imperial Majesty, Ji Ning requests an audience," the white-faced elder said respectfully.

"Ji Ning? Let him enter." The black-robed Xia Emperor, seated in the lotus position atop his jade bed, opened his eyes.

Soon, a youth entered the room.

"Imperial Majesty." Ning saluted respectfully.

"Ji Ning, why have you come to speak to me in the middle of the night?" The Xia Emperor laughed.

Ji Ning said, "To be honest, there's something I would ask of you, your Imperial Majesty."

"Oh?" The Xia Emperor listened.

"Nine days from now, I'm preparing to have my Primaltwin undergo the Celestial Tribulation," Ning said. "However...I imagine that the Seamless Gate has had their sights set on me for quite some time now, and they seem to have perfect knowledge regarding the location of every Void-level individual's tribulation. I believe that no matter how careful I am, they will still be able to find out where my tribulation is. During the tribulation, when the demonheart tribulation begins, even my true body will be unable to fight back. I will be at my weakest at this period of time, and the Seamless Gate definitely won't give up that opportunity. Thus...I've come to ask you to help, your Imperial Majesty."

The Xia Emperor laughed. "Haha, don't worry about this. Undergoing the Celestial Tribulation is an important matter; I'll naturally protect you with all my might."

In truth, Ning felt rather resigned. Unless his master, Patriarch Subhuti, actively reached out to him, there was no way for Ning to contact him, much less return to the world of the Crescent. If that wasn't the case, he would've returned to the Crescent world for his tribulation, which would've been much safer. After all, the other major powers were unable to even locate the Crescent world.

The Starseizing world left behind by Daoist Threelives was also very safe, but until he was acknowledged as the true heir, he wouldn't be able to enter at all.

And so, in the end, he had come to ask the Xia Emperor for help.

One of the reasons why Ji Ning had revealed his sharpness last time was for this.

"However...it probably won't be enough for me to guard you during your tribulation." The Xia Emperor frowned. "When you undergo your tribulation, you will be completely defenseless. Although the Seamless Gate won't be strong enough to defeat me...they still might

be capable of some other tricks, such as tearing through space to arrive at your tribulation area, resisting my forces for a short period of time, then killing you."

Ning nodded.

There were figures within the Three Realms capable of killing him. For example, magic treasures that contained and was able to unleash extremely powerful truefire or truewater would be capable of completely annihilating him. However...under normal circumstances, he would be able to fight back; he wouldn't be so foolish as to allow himself to be trapped within those treasures.

"How about this...I'll take you to the 'seat of awakening'¹ of my master," the Xia Emperor said with a laugh. "You definitely won't encounter any problems while undergoing your tribulation at my master's place."

Ning was both surprised and delighted.

The Xia Emperor's master? Daofather Crimsonbright?

If he could receive protection from a Daofather, his tribulation would become far safer. Having a powerful backer really did make a difference! As for his own master, Patriarch Subhuti...sheesh. He was the ultimate arbiter of whether or not his disciples would even be allowed to return to the Crescent world. By contrast, Daofather Crimsonbright had openly taken control over dozens of major worlds and countless minor worlds.

However, it was precisely because of how secretive he was that Patriarch Subhuti had become known as the most mysterious Daofather of the Three Realms.

"But, but...would the Daofather permit me to enter?" Ning hesitated slightly.

"Let me report this matter to my master, first. If his place won't work, then I'll take you to my big brother's place," the Xia Emperor laughed.

Big brother?

Ji Ning instantly thought of the Xia Emperor's lifelong friend...
Daofather Raindragon! Yet another Daofather!

A seat of awakening, aka Bodhimanda, is the place where a Buddhist or a Daoist gains enlightenment. ↵

Chapter 18 – Demonheart

"Thank you, your Imperial Majesty." Ji Ning was utterly delighted.

The Xia Emperor nodded. "The Celestial Tribulation is the greatest, most dangerous tribulation any Immortal cultivator will face on his path. One cannot be overconfident in dealing with it. Since you have karmic sinflames around you, your demonheart tribulation will definitely be quite extraordinary..."

Ning nodded.

Right.

Demonheart...

Last time, when the karmic sinflames had unleashed three rounds of tribulations upon him, Ning had realized how terrifying his demonheart tribulation would be. In truth...he didn't know for certain if he would be able to withstand it this time.

"Then I'll leave now, your Imperial Majesty," Ning said.

"Go. I'll decide upon your tribulation area within the next two days," the Xia Emperor said.

Ning immediately left.

This trip had been worth it. The Xia Emperor's promise of assistance...if a Daofather truly was going to protect him, then he would have no outside factors to worry about during his Celestial Tribulation.

.....

"Damn."

The day after Ning had gone to speak to the Xia Emperor. The azure-robed woman had previously been seating calmly in the lotus

position atop her jade bed. Now, her face changed. She immediately barked, "Hurry up and invite True Immortal Gaudy, True Immortal Deadgrass, Celestial Immortal Blackheaven, Celestial Immortal Venomfreak, Empyrean God Threesuns, and Empyrean God Beastleave. Also invite the leaders of the Myriad Demons Cave and Bloodcloud Hall."

"Alright." The maid outside immediately acknowledged the order.

A short while later, everyone had arrived within the palace.

Empyrean God Azurefox, Empyrean God Threesuns, and Empyrean God Beastleave were of the Seamless Gate. True Immortal Gaudy and True Immortal Deadgrass were both Pure Yang True Immortals, while Celestial Immortal Blackheaven was equivalent to them in status. Immortal Venomfreak had the lowest status of the group.

Empyrean Gods and True Immortals were major figures of the Three Realms, after all, and when they took on masters, their masters were usually Daofathers. In fact, within the Three Realms, almost all Empyrean Gods or True Immortals had a Daofather or True God supporting them. Thus, even though Ji Ning might have a Daofather master, they wouldn't really care that much; the only thing causing them some nervousness was the fact that Ji Ning had trained in the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art].

"The situation has changed." After everyone arrived, the azure-robed woman spoke out in a solemn voice.

"What happened?" They all looked at her.

They knew that she must have invited them all over to discuss matters pertaining to Ji Ning. The faces of Blackheaven and Venomfreak instantly changed; of the people present, these two cared about this matter the most.

The azure-robed woman said solemnly, "I just received word that the location of Ji Ning's tribulation has been set."

"Where?" Blackheaven immediately asked.

"He asked the Xia Emperor to protect him. The Xia Emperor, wanting to be cautious, didn't summon his own forces. Instead, he reported this to Daofather Crimsonbright, asking for Ji Ning to be allowed to undergo his tribulation at Daofather Crimsonbright's seat of awakening. Daofather Crimsonbright has already given the nod and agreed," the azure-robed woman said.

This news was actually top-secret. The Xia Emperor hadn't even told his subordinates about it, and very few people by the side of Daofather Crimsonbright knew about it. The Seamless Gate, however, had found out right away. The accuracy and lethality of their intelligence...it was the best in the Three Realms! It had reached an utterly terrifying level.

However, the people present didn't have any desire to ponder about such matters. All of them knew exactly how formidable the Seamless Gate's intelligence network was.

"Daofather Crimsonbright?"

"If it's at his seat of awakening, then we have no chance at all."

"Are we going to have to invite a major power?"

They all began to worry.

Forget about their incarnations and their clones; even if they sent their true bodies in to violate a Daofather's seat of awakening... Daofather Crimsonbright would probably wipe them all out in an instant.

"There's no way our superiors will start a war against Daofather Crimsonbright for Ji Ning's sake." The azure-robed woman shook her head. "Once a battle starts, the other Daofathers and True Gods will jump in as well...the end result might be a massive, chaotic war amongst True Gods and Daofathers. We can't possibly afford to pay such a price."

"Right." They all nodded.

If a huge storm erupted due to personal grudges between True Gods and Daofathers, that was one thing. But if as a result of their report, a huge storm erupted that claimed the lives of two or three of their Daofathers...they wouldn't be able to bear that sort of responsibility.

"Then what should we do?" Blackheaven frowned and barked.

Everyone was silent.

However, the horned figure that had been silent up till now suddenly laughed. "I have an idea."

"Oh?" All of them looked over to him.

Immortal Venomfreak laughed, "Exalted Immortals, all of you should know that when Ji Ning battled against my Youngflame clan, he was punished with karmic sinflames."

"Yes."

"Right."

All of their eyes lit up; they were all intelligent people, and only one word was all it took for them to sense what Immortal Venomfreak was saying.

"Due to the karmic sinflames, when he undergoes his Celestial Tribulation, the power of the wind, fire, and thunder tribulations will increase significantly, but those aren't that important...what really matters is his demonheart tribulation. That's when the tribulation shall become the most astonishing and the most terrifying."

Immortal Venomfreak laughed. "I already know exactly what sort of a person this Ji Ning is; he cares deeply about filial piety and loyalty to his loved ones and friends. He's willing to die for his loved ones, and he's also willing to die for his brothers."

"Right." The nearby fire-robed man nodded. "To save his junior

apprentice-brother, this Ji Ning once launched a major battle within one of the bases of our Myriad Demons Cave, not worrying about offending us at all."

"His devotion to his friends is worthy of our admiration; although I, Venomfreak, would never act like him, I still admire him very much." Immortal Venomfreak chortled. "The greatest strength of a person like him is that his devotion can make his Dao-heart incredibly, terrifyingly strong. But at the same time, his devotion is also his weak spot; once it crumbles, then his Dao-heart will also crumble."

"Now, since Ji Ning overcame karmic sinflames, it's not very likely that we will be able to make the devotion he feels for his loved ones crumble. However...it's possible for us to fill his heart with boundless rage and hate!"

"Kill those who he cares about!"

"Kill that 'Uncle White', who he treats as he would a father or a mother! Kill that obedient little spirit-beast of his, that Azure Skysnake!"

"Kill that Autumn Leaf, who he loves as he would a sister."

"His Dao-companion, Yu Wei."

"His junior apprentice-brother, Mu Northson."

"Kill them all! Ji Ning will definitely be enraged, and he'll definitely turn berserk and go mad!" Immortal Venomfreak's smile began even more brilliant. "Although sometimes madness can increase one's power...during the demonheart tribulation, going berserk is one of the greatest taboos. There are very, very few berserk demons who are capable of overcoming their Celestial Tribulation, unless they truly have pure Dao-hearts and truly are born demons. However, Ji Ning is not a demon by nature; there's no way he can have a pure, demonic Dao-heart."

"Good idea." The azure-robed woman nodded. "However, Yu Wei

cannot be killed."

"Cannot kill Yu Wei?" Immortal Venomfreak nodded. "Although killing the others would also enrage him...Yu Wei is his Dao-companion. Killing her will have the greatest impact on Ji Ning."

"No. Yu Wei is Lu Dongbin's disciple. Our target right now is Ji Ning; I don't want to pull Lu Dongbin into the mix." The azure-robed woman swept them with her gaze. "You should all know that if Lu Dongbin gets involved...then our branch of the Seamless Gate probably wouldn't be able to survive."

Everyone turned solemn.

The Godking had a total of three hundred Seamless Gates under his command. Although their particular branch was strong, Lu Dongbin himself was incredibly powerful, and his friends spanned the Three Realms. He was only friendly terms with more than ten True Gods and Daofathers. One of them treated Lu Dongbin like a son...and that one was one of the most supremely powerful leaders of the Daoist Path. If Lu Dongbin got into the mix...it could indeed cause a tremendous storm. Even if he just called his friends, such as the Eight Immortals of the High Caves, that would be enough to wipe out their Seamless Gate.

"Fine. We won't touch Yu Wei."

"Don't touch her."

Everyone agreed.

Immortal Venomfreak secretly smirked. These people only dared to go after the easy targets. It seemed as though in the Seamless Gate... only the most powerful of figures would dare cause trouble for the likes of Lu Dongbin. These Empyrean Gods and True Immortals present today, at least, didn't have the courage to go up against him.

"Haha, killing the others is enough. That Uncle White, that Autumn Leaf...they are family to Ji Ning." Immortal Venomfreak laughed.

"Gatemaster, when shall we move?"

"There's no time to waste. Let's make some quick preparations, then make our move tomorrow morning and assault Serpentwing Lake." The azure-robed woman added, "If Ji Ning is at Serpentwing Lake as well, then let's kill him as well. If we can't kill him, killing those targets will satisfy our objectives."

"Right."

They all nodded.

Time flowed on. Soon, the day ended...and the next day arrived.

Chapter 19 – On Brightheart Island

It was at the cusp of summer, with spring coming to an end. The morning was rather cool.

Swallow Mountain, Serpentwing Lake, Brightheart Island. Ji Ning walked out of his room by himself, with Yu Wei still asleep. At the Celestial Immortal level, one usually did not need to rise early or engage in an austere lifestyle. What really mattered was understanding the Dao. Once one reached a sufficiently high level in the Dao, such as mastering of a Grand Dao, then ki would manifest within the chest, causing one to immediately become a Pure Yang True Immortal.

However, the mastery of a Grand Dao was simply far too difficult. Many Celestial Immortals were trapped in front of the final bottleneck before mastery, unable to take that last step no matter how they tried.

Thus, Yu Wei's life was quite relaxed; she wouldn't even get out of bed until the Golden Crow had risen high into the sky.

Whoosh. Whoosh. Whoosh.. As Ning walked towards the waters of the lake, he could make out the rustling sound of the waves of Serpentwing Lake striking against the shore. Even when there was no wind, this massive lake would have three-foot tall waves, and so the sound of the waves striking against the shore was heard quite often.

Ning held a Darknorth sword in his hand, resting it over a shoulder as he strode past many buildings.

"Young master."

"Young master."

Many of the servants and maids of Brightheart Island called out to him as he walked past.

Ning quickly arrived at the island's shore.

Snick. Snick. Not too far away, there was a gray-haired old man who was holding a giant pair of shears with both hands, trimming away at the flowers and vegetation. Brightheart Island was kept in pristine condition, like a true paradise, and the efforts of these gardeners were a crucial part. Clearly, this old gardener was completely absorbed in his trimming, as he didn't even notice that the master of the Brightheart Island, Ji Ning, had arrived.

Ning gave the old gardener a glance. He chuckled, then began to train with his sword.

Sword-light began to flash.

Ning's sword-arts had become even more pure. They didn't seem very dazzling, but they seemed to carry a thoroughly penetrating power to them. Anyone who watched would feel as though the tip of the sword was always aimed straight at their eyes. This sort of sharpness, this sort of penetrative power...ordinary Immortal cultivators who saw it would only feel that it was strange. Only when Celestial Immortals saw it would they understand how truly formidable it was.

Slowly...

The Golden Crow rose into the skies. The temperature began to rise. It was no longer cool, and as the rays of the Golden Crow shone down, they brought warmth to the world.

By now, the old gardener had noticed Ning. However, he didn't dare to disturb him; he just sat down to one side, watching with curiosity. As he watched...he slowly began to feel drowsy, due to how warm and comfortable it was. Bit by bit, he drifted off into sleep.

A short while later.

A tall, willowy, white-robed woman walked over; it was Yu Wei.

She normally always dressed in black clothes, but ever since she became pregnant, she would often change into new outfits.

"Let's watch your daddy train with the sword." Yu Wei waved her arm, and a crystalline, jade-like table and chair appeared out of nowhere. With a second wave, she caused some Immortal nectars and spirit-fruit to appear. As she sat down, she noticed the old gardener snoozing off in the distance. She couldn't help but smile, then turned her head to watch Ning train with the sword.

The waters of the lake washed up against the shore repeatedly. The warm morning sun shone down upon them. The old gardener snoozed contentedly, while her Dao-companion trained with the sword.

Yu Wei stroked her stomach. What a beautiful scene!

"You woke up."

Ning came to a halt and walked over to her.

"You are about to go for your Celestial Tribulation. Of course I had to come watch you train," Yu Wei laughed. "How do you feel?"

"Superb." Ning smiled. "My heart feels very peaceful, and my insights into the Dao of the Sword continue to rise. To be honest...I can sense that I am very close to the final bottleneck in the Dao of the Sword. In perhaps another half year or year, I'll be able to reach that bottleneck."

It wasn't too hard to reach the bottleneck. Breaking through it to gain full mastery of the Dao of the Sword, however, was incredibly hard. Still...Ning had once experienced the [Thousand Year Dream], which his master, Patriarch Subhuti, had provided to him so as to help him get a taste in advance of what it would be like to have full mastery of the Dao of the Sword. Given that he also was in control of a hint of a swordforce...he felt confident that it would be much easier for him to break through this bottleneck than it was for ordinary Celestial

Immortals.

However, even though it might be easier, not even Ning knew how long it would be before he would actually make the breakthrough.

Only when he mastered the Dao of the Sword would he have his true body undergo its tribulation. If he succeeded and became an Empyrean God...then his life would have truly changed!

But all of it was dependent upon him mastering the Dao of the Sword.

"Why don't you train for a bit longer? First reach the bottleneck, then have your Primaltwin undergo the tribulation," Yu Wei said.

"My Primaltwin is in control of heartforce; it's more than strong enough by now. Even if I do improve slightly in the Dao of the Sword, it won't be of that much help to me," Ning said. Their words were naturally sealed off from the surrounding area, preventing anyone else on the island from listening in.

Ning's words were correct.

With his full mastery over his third level heartforce...his natural level of power was already that of a supreme Celestial Immortal's.

Even if a mere Primal Daoist was somehow so monstrously talented as to be able to take perfect control over the third stage of heartforce, that Primal Daoist's power would also rise to that of a supreme Celestial Immortal's. Heartforce was an extremely mysterious form of power; generally speaking, only Empyrean Gods and True Immortals could slowly begin to grasp it, while a number of True Gods and Daofathers had some degree of skill in it.

It was far too rare, however, for anyone at the Void-level to have gained insights into it. As for Primal Daoists doing the same, this had never before happened!

Ning's Primaltwin was now in perfect control of his third-stage

heartforce; its power had similarly skyrocketed to the supreme Celestial Immortal level. For a Ki Refiner...this sort of power was absolutely enough to overcome the thunder tribulation, while the wind tribulation and fire tribulation were even less dangerous. Only the most unfathomable tribulation, the demonheart tribulation, remained a threat.

Insights into the Dao of the Sword wouldn't be of much help to fighting the demonheart tribulation.

"And...my subconscious is whispering to me that the next few days are the best period of time for undergoing my tribulation," Ning said.

"Oh?" Yu Wei nodded.

.....

Just as Ning and Yu Wei, this loving pair of Dao-companions, were chatting together...

In the skies above a location deep within the southern seas of the Grand Xia, a spatial rift suddenly appeared. An awe-inspiring group flew into the world, each member of the group possessing powerful auras. The leaders were True Immortal Gaudy, Fairy Deadgrass, Empyrean God Beastleave, and Empyrean God Threesuns.

Although these were merely their incarnations or clones, in possession of just a tenth of their full power, they were still definitely at the Empyrean God or True Immortal level of power. They were significantly more powerful than Ji Ning, who could be considered to have just barely reached the minimum threshold of that level of power.

Celestial Immortal Blackheaven and Immortal Venomfreak were also present, and behind them were a group of black-robed figures. Every single black-robed figure had an astonishing aura that was filled with savagery and brutality. The first time Immortal Venomfreak had seen this group, he couldn't help but feel nervousness. "The

Hellsworn of Bloodcloud Hall...they are legendary Deathsworn who came forth from the Infinity Hells. What are these 'Infinity Hells'? The eighteen hells of the Netherworld shouldn't be able to produce terrifying figures."

Immortal Venomfreak had just recently joined, after all; there were many secrets which he did not know, and he didn't dare to ask too many questions either.

"We've arrived at the Grand Xia." True Immortal Gaudy said, "Venomfreak, you weren't confident in being able to teleport from the Fifth World to Serpentwing Lake, but now that we are at the Grand Xia, it shouldn't be a problem, yes?"

"Yes, it will be easy. Forget about Serpentwing Lake; I can teleport us straight to Brightheart Island." Immortal Venomfreak smiled, confidence in his eyes. "For the sake of killing Ji Ning, I gained a thorough understanding of Brightheart Island of Serpentwing Lake; I know its layout intimately."

"Good." True Immortal Gaudy nodded. "Then use a Greater Teleport."

A blood-red pearl appeared in the skies.

Whoosh.

Immortal Venomfreak waved his hand again. None of them resisted as they were drawn into that blood-red pearl. This pearl was merely a Heaven-ranked magic treasure that contained a holding space within it; the likes of True Immortal Gaudy and the others could easily destroy it from the inside and emerge as needed. In addition, they could see what was going on in the outside world, so they weren't worry about Immortal Venomfreak playing any tricks on them. And...if he really did, the Seamless Gate would never spare him. The Seamless Gate was able to keep track of everything they were doing, after all.

"Let's go." Pearl in hand, Immortal Venomfreak immediately used a

Greater Teleport.

Whoosh.

.....

Serpentwing Lake. Brightheart Island.

This place was as beautiful and paradise-like as ever. Many servants and maids had already risen from bed and started on a few simple tasks.

Ning and Yu Wei were seated together, drinking some warm wine.

"Come here and feel it. Can you feel the movement?" Yu Wei placed Ning's hand on her stomach.

Ning carefully pressed his palm down, sensing the pulses coming from her belly. The pulses were very minute, very fine.

These little pulsing movements caused Ning to feel a very strange, unique feeling in his heart. This feeling was a powerful, protective urge, the urge an eagle might feel to protect its chicks. Ning was filled with a desire to ensure that nothing would happen to this little soul.

Yu Wei looked at Ning, looked at the expressions on his face.

Rumble...

This was a soundless, formless spatial ripple...but this ripple, the ripple of Greater Teleportation, caused more shock and alarm to Ning and Yu Wei than the collapse of the ground below them.

"Not good. That's Greater Teleportation!" Ning immediately turned around. "I can't let them harm senior apprentice-sister."

When Ning had sensed the pulses, he had immediately understood that even if he had to die, he would ensure the safety of the two of them.

"Senior bear, senior Redsnow, something bad has just happened." As Ning turned, he immediately called out to the seven Empyrean Gods. As he did...he instantly saw the ugly, horned man who had just appeared far away.

"Youngflame Freak?" Ning instantly recognized this man, the Ancestor of the Youngflame clan.

The horned man grinned savagely, and his hoarse, ear-piercing voice that sounded like a jagged knife sawing through a table instantly rang out throughout Brightheart Island. "Ji Ning. What a coincidence!" His power, filled with a Celestial Immortal's energy, echoed throughout the island.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

A large number of people suddenly appeared next to Youngflame Freak. The leaders of the group caused Ning's eyelids to twitch. He instantly recognized True Immortal Gaudy; if it hadn't been for the Xia Emperor, he probably would've been forced to ask senior Redsnow and the others to intervene. And this time...Gaudy wasn't alone. Next to him were three figures whose auras were no weaker than his!

"Four Empyrean Gods or True Immortals?" Ning felt tremendous shock. "Even if I immediately asked the Xia Emperor for assistance, if he doesn't bring enough people, it will probably be very hard for him to stop them."

"Senior Redsnow!" Ning frantically called out to them.

The seven Empyrean Gods had been located within the Starseizing world; they only began to emerge once the giant yellow bear notified them, which naturally needed a bit of time.

"What a perfect opportunity. Kill Ji Ning."

Fifty-five figures had emerged within the skies. Celestial Immortal Blackheaven immediately let out a furious roar, while the eyes of the

four leaders became filled with murderous intents. The wave of murderous intents swept down towards Ning, causing him to feel a greater sense of danger than he had ever felt before. He had the feeling that if he tried to fight back by himself, he would probably die in a single clash!

"I'M...TRYING...TO SLEEP!!!!!" An utterly enraged roar suddenly rang out.

The old gardener who had dozed off nearby suddenly rose to his feet, a frown on his face. He actually coughed twice as he stared at the fifty-five figures in midair. "That damned duck that squawked just now had a horrible-sounding voice! Do you guys want to die?!"

Everyone was stunned.

Ji Ning and Yu Wei stared in shock at the old gardener. Only an instant had passed, but the old gardener had actually slowly risen to his feet, coughed twice, then said a few things. It was as though time was passing at completely different speeds for them and the old gardener.

As for the fifty-five figures in midair, they were even more stunned and amazed.

This was because they suddenly realized something...

"Why can't we move?!"

Chapter 20 – The Four Ancestors of the River Source

True Immortal Gaudy, Fairy Deadgrass, and the others with them in the air were frozen like sculptures. They couldn't even blink, and the Empyrean God energy or Pure Yang energy in their bodies had been completely frozen, unable to be activated in the slightest. This sort of feeling, of absolute paralysis, caused Gaudy and the others to feel amazement in their hearts.

"A Daofather."

"It must be a Daofather."

"But, but...there's actually a Daofather on Ji Ning's Brightheart Island?"

None of them had imagined that their assault would result in them kicking into a steel plate like this! Their Greater Teleport had been quite a lucky one; they had teleport straight to Brightheart Island, and because Brightheart Island wasn't that large, they had arrived very close to Ji Ning! And in fact, even if their teleportation was a bit off, the formations of Serpentwing Lake would not have been able to resist the likes of True Immortal Gaudy, who had completely mastered the Grand Dao of Qiankun.

But now they realized...they weren't lucky at all. In fact, their luck was terrible to the extreme!

"Senior." Both Ji Ning and Yu Wei hurriedly called out respectfully to the man.

"Mm." The old gardener still held those gardening shears in his hands as he lazily sauntered over. Upon hearing both Ning and Yu Wei addressing him respectfully as 'senior', he nodded. "Good, you know how to be respectful to the elderly."

Ning and Yu Wei instantly felt speechless.

An exalted Daofather...had first pretended to be a gardener, and now was putting on airs as an old man. He had completely destroyed the image which Ji Ning had of Daofathers in his mind.

"You brats that are hanging up there in the air." The old gardener raised his head, looking at the fifty-five figures frozen in midair. He immediately said, "You woke this old man up with your yammering. Anything you want to say before you die?"

As soon as he said these words, True Immortal Gaudy and the others in midair suddenly felt as though their mouths could now move.

"We offended you by accident, senior," True Immortal Gaudy said respectfully.

"Senior, please let us leave," Fairy Deadgrass said a very soft voice.

The forces of the Seamless Gate were all behaving in an extremely humble manner. However, they had quickly recovered from their initial shock. If this was a Daofather, he probably wouldn't casually act in a way which might start a war. The Daofathers on both sides were still holding back for now; perhaps this Daofather they had run into might mock them for a bit, but let them live.

As far as they were concerned, the death of an incarnation or a clone wasn't too big a deal; what really mattered was the important treasures they were carrying. In fact, they had multiple top-grade Pure Yang treasures with them! This was the reason why their incarnations and clones were capable of unleashing such tremendous power. Celestial Immortal Blackheaven had been so enraged that his clone had even brought a Protocosmic spirit-treasure!

"It seems we've passed through this latest crisis." Ning and Yu Wei both let out secret sighs of relief. However...Ning knew very well that the Seamless Gate was so powerful that not even his master, Patriarch Subhuti, would casually act against their minor figures. This Daofather who apparently loved to play games probably

wouldn't act too recklessly either.

"Ji Ning, kid," the old gardener suddenly called out.

"Senior," Ning hurriedly said.

"Tell me, should I kill these people?" The old gardener smiled merrily at Ning. "If you say I should, then I'll kill them. If you say I shouldn't, I'll release them. How's that?"

Ning was stunned.

The fifty-five members of the Seamless Gate in midair were stunned as well.

"It is your prerogative to decide whether or not to kill them, senior," Ning immediately said. He wouldn't be so truly presumptuous as to instruct a Daofather in what should be done! If this Daofather was merely jesting with him but didn't actually want to start a battle, and if Ning said the wrong thing...it would be terrible.

"It seems you still feel a bit suspicious." The old gardener sighed. "If this old man felt the urge, I'd even kill Lu Dongbin, the precious little darling of the Daoist leader, to say nothing of these people!"

Ning was shocked.

In this instant...the faces of True Immortal Gaudy, Fairy Deadgrass, Celestial Immortal Blackheaven, Empyrean God Threesuns, Empyrean God Beastleave, and Immortal Venomfreak, all still hovering in midair, changed.

"Old Man Yuan?"

"Old Man Yuan?"

They all realized who this person was.

"Senior, are you Old Man Yuan?" True Immortal Gaudy spoke out. In the Three Realms, the only person who referred to himself as 'this

old man' and who would dare to kill even Lu Dongbin was the low-key, mysterious Old Man Yuan.

"That I am." The old gardener chortled merrily as he looked at them.
"Now...are there any questions in your heart as to whether or not I would dare kill you?"

The forces of the Seamless Gate were stricken with terror. They were no longer able to remain calm, but in their hearts they were cursing. *Exalted Old Man Yuan, if you want to kill us, just kill us. Why are you saying so much to us?* It seemed as though the legends regarding this man were true; Old Man Yuan really was a crazy old man.

"Old Man Yuan?" Ning revealed a look of surprise as well.

In turn, Yu Wei had learned of some of the Daofathers of the Three Realms from Lu Dongbin.

Although Ning hadn't gone out of his way to investigate all the True Gods and Daofathers of the Three Realms during his time at Mount Innerheart, the disciples of the Mount Innerheart League would often chit-chat about some of the most supreme True Gods and Daofathers when they were bored. This person, Old Man Yuan, was often mentioned.

Old Man Yuan was also one of the True Gods who had been born from the primordial chaos. However, his comprehension abilities were far superior to Daoist Threelives, and his status was far higher as well. He had long ago mastered a Heavenly Dao and become a Daofather of the Great Firmament! After doing so, his power had reached an utterly ridiculous level. He belonged to neither the Daoist Path, nor to the Buddhist Sangha. He had become a power unto himself, and he himself possessed power overwhelming. He was truly one of the most supreme Daofathers of the Three Realms, and he had two other Daofathers under his tutelage! In addition to that... he had three lifelong friends who were also three incredibly powerful Daofathers.

The four of them were referred to within the Three Realms as the 'Four Ancestors of the River Source'¹. The Four Ancestors of the River Source were extremely close friends; they always attacked and retreated in unison. All four of them were incredibly powerful Daofathers, and if one also factored in their various disciples and friends...they would be considered an incredibly powerful force of the Three Realms.

As for Old Man Yuan...he was the most powerful member of the Four Ancestors of the River Source. He was their leader!

How powerful was he, exactly?

No one knew for certain. Some said that Old Man Yuan was, logically speaking, weaker than the two leaders of the Buddhist Sangha and the Daoist Path. Others said that Old Man Yuan should be comparable to those two leaders. In short...this was a crazy, yet terrifyingly powerful old man.

"Damn..." True Immortal Gaudy and the others felt misery in their hearts.

The Three Realms were currently divided into two major alliances.

The likes of Patriarch Subhuti had long ago chosen an alliance...but the Four Ancestors of the River Source had remained neutral. In the end, nobody would be able to avoid getting drawn into the war between these two alliances, but for now, before battle had truly begun...both sides were actively courting the Four Ancestors of the River Source. They had to; the four were simply too powerful. These were not four ordinary Daofathers; all four of them had been born as True Gods of Primordial Chaos, and stood at the very top of power amongst Daofathers. Old Man Yuan, in particular, was one of the utmost supreme major powers of the Three Realms.

If Subhuti dared to kill these fifty-five, the major powers behind the Seamless Gate would probably strike back; they were enemies, after all.

But if Old Man Yuan was the one to kill them...the major powers behind the Seamless Gate definitely wouldn't intervene. They had been working so hard to have the Four Ancestors of the River Source join them; how would they dare to offend this old man now?

"Now you should realize that I wasn't joking with you, right?" The old gardener beamed merrily as he looked at Ning. "This old man is going to ask you again; should I kill them? If you say yes, then I'll kill them."

Ning no longer hesitated at all. He nodded. "You should."

"Nice." The old gardener nodded with satisfaction. "That's more like it."

"Senior!"

The paralyzed members of the Seamless Gate, still hanging up high in the sky, were filled with terror.

"Begone." The old gardener casually tossed out his giant gardening shears, sending it flying upwards. This was clearly a pair of ordinary gardening shears; it would probably break apart if one tried to use it to cut an ordinary rock. And yet, it now went flying towards the midair bodies of the True Immortals and Empyrean Gods. Even the clones of such figures would have bodies that were incredibly tough.

Snick!

It was like cutting through paper. The body of an Empyrean God was bisected...and then his auras vanished. He was deader than dead.

Snick! Snick! Snick!

True Immortal Gaudy, Fairy Deadgrass, and Immortal Venomfreak were utterly terrified. They repeatedly called out 'senior!', but snick, snick, snick...they were still cut to death by the gardening shears. In the blink of an eye, all fifty-five members of the Seamless Gate had

been slain. Although the metal shears had moved quite slowly, no major powers had appeared to intervene.

Ning's eyes lit up as he watched.

Wonderful!

Those bastards had actually attacked Ning's home; it was wonderful to see them killed.

"Oho, although those little minions of the Seamless Gate only sent their clones and incarnations over, they brought a few nice things with them. Three top-grade Pure Yang treasures, and a Protocosmic spirit-treasure." The old gardener waved his hand, and the items left behind by the deceased members of the Seamless Gate flew forward to levitate in the air before Ji Ning and Yu Wei. "They don't suit this old man. You take them."

Ning blinked.

Yu Wei was stunned as well.

Them?

What in the...

After apprenticing himself to Patriarch Subhuti, Ning had been forced to painstakingly adventure through the Crescent world. Thanks to tremendous luck and hard work, he had acquired a single Protocosmic spirit-treasure, the Rahu Bow...and the bowstring had been broken, at that! This Old Man Yuan was even more generous than his own master!

"What, aren't you willing to accept them?" Old Man Yuan stared.

"I am, I am, I am!" Ning was so frightened, he repeated himself three times. "How would this junior dare to refuse the gift of a senior?" He immediately waved his hand, accepting the treasures.

"That's more like it. If you are going to do something, just do it; don't hem and haw and dawdle about like a girl," Old Man Yuan said with a laugh. "I've already spent several months living here at your Brightheart Island."

Several months?

Ning was puzzled. This gardener had been here for far longer.

"I've just been possessing this old gardener," Old Man Yuan said with a merry chuckle. "I spent months here before you came back to Brightheart Island, you brat. Mm...I've watched you train with the sword several times now. Your sword-arts aren't bad, but your control over heartforce is even better."

Watched him several times?

Aside from this time...Ning couldn't recall a time when the old gardener had been nearby. Oh, right; given Old Man Yuan's power, he would be easily able to watch Ning train with the sword, even from a tremendous distance.

"Buuuut..." Old Man Yuan said, puzzled, "Why is it that you seem to be so stupid?"

"Stupid?" Ning was puzzled. This was the first time that anyone had called him stupid!

"You completely focus your heartforce into your sword-fingers. Why haven't you considered applying it to your legs or the rest of your body? That way, when you use your evasive divine abilities, your speed would increase dramatically, right? In the fact of those so-called 'True Immortals' and 'Empyrean Gods', your escaping speed would improve dramatically; you would no longer be forced to just stand there like an idiot and take them head on," Old Man Yuan said.

Ning shook his head. "It isn't that easy to apply heartforce. It took me eighteen years of painstaking training before I was able to apply it to my sword-fingers."

"The reason it isn't easy is because you don't have a good teacher. Your teacher doesn't know a damn thing about heartforce." Old Man Yuan chortled. "What do you think of my power?"

"Your power is incredible, of course, senior!" Ning said hurriedly.

"Then hurry up and kowtow to me as your master!" Old Man Yuan puffed his chest up.

The name 'Yuan' means source. ↵

Chapter 21 – Master?

Within the towering palace in the Fifth World.

The three leaders of the Seamless Gate, Myriad Demons Cave, and Bloodcloud Hall were all gathered here, along with True Immortal Gaudy, Empyrean God Beastleave, Empyrean God Threesuns, Fairy Deadgrass, Celestial Immortal Blackheaven, and Immortal Venomfreak. They had only sent their clones or incarnations to deal with Ji Ning, but they were still watching nervously.

This was because they had brought powerful treasures, such as Empyrean God constructs and Protocosmic spirit-treasures.

“We reached Swallow Mountain.”

“We’re fairly lucky; we actually encountered Ji Ning after a single Greater Teleport.”

“Hurry up and kill Ji Ning.”

They all stared intently at the mirror in the air. The mirror was displaying images from what was happening within Brightheart Island. Fairy Deadgrass was standing close to it, and every so often she would say a few things. Then, suddenly...

“What the hell?!”

Whoosh!

The azure-robed woman and the others all jumped to their feet. They stared intently at the old gardener holding the gardening shears who had just woken up and stood up.

“Who is that?!”

“Our clones and incarnations can’t even move. We can’t even use our elemental energy.”

"He's terrifying...he must be a Daofather. Otherwise, there's no way he could be this powerful." True Immortal Gaudy, Empyrean God Beastleave, and the others all had ugly looks on their faces.

"How can there be a Daofather at Brightheart Island?!?" The azure-robed woman roared furiously.

A short while later, after the old gardener chatted with Ji Ning for a while, his identity was revealed.

"Old Man Yuan, of the Four Ancestors of the River Source?" The azure-robed woman's face turned ashen. Everyone present was stunned.

"Ugh. I just lost my horsetail whisk." True Immortal Gaudy had an ugly look on his face; that was a top-grade Pure Yang treasure. Although this wasn't one of the treasures he liked the most and used the most, the loss of a top-grade Pure Yang treasure still caused him some heartache.

"Don't say a thing. Blackheaven suffered the worst loss this time."

They all looked towards Celestial Immortal Blackheaven.

Blackheaven had lost a Protocosmic spirit-treasure!

"Damn." Blackheaven ground his teeth. "Ji Ning managed to escape again." In truth, Blackheaven was angrier over having not killed Ji Ning than over his loss of a Protocosmic spirit-treasure.

"He's acting now." Immortal Venomfreak and the others watched as the mirror showed images of the giant gardening shears snicking through them. He said hatefully, "This Old Man Yuan really shows no mercy at all."

"If Old Man Yuan wants to kill you, what can you do?" The fire-robed man shook his head and snickered, "Forget about clones and incarnations...even if he wanted to kill your true body, he'd do so without pause."

Rumble...

After the mirror finished sending images of everyone being ‘snicked’ and killed by the giant gardening shears, the shears turned towards the sky and made one final ‘snick’. Instantly, no further images appeared in the mirror; they were no longer able to watch what was going on.

“Old Man Yuan won’t let us watch any more,” the azure-robed woman said. “Given his abilities...he must know that we were watching what was happening there. The reason why he let us watch him act was because he wanted to let our superiors, the major powers of the Seamless Gate, realize that he is going to protect Ji Ning.”

“Old Man Yuan isn’t even on our side. Does he really think he can just protect whoever he wants?” Blackheaven growled, “Right now, we’re trying to court him, but once the great storm truly erupts, no one will be able to escape it. He’ll have to make a choice. Ji Ning already has a Daofather as his master, and an enemy one at that; if Old Man Yuan chooses to join us, then in the future he’ll become an enemy to Ji Ning’s master. I refuse to believe he’ll still protect Ji Ning then! And if he doesn’t join our side...then we can completely ignore him when we move to kill Ji Ning.”

Everyone present nodded.

“However...the storm has yet to truly erupt.” The azure-robed woman shook her head. “Old Man Yuan is still standing to one side and watching. He hasn’t truly made a choice yet; it’s not appropriate for us to offend Old Man yuan.”

“You are over-thinking things.” Blackheaven let out a snicker. “Do you think that is something for you to concern yourself with?”

The azure-robed woman’s face sank. Blackheaven was acting far too impudently. Even with so many others present, he still dared to speak in such a manner.

Alas, Blackheaven wasn't under her command, and she still wasn't sure of his true power. In addition, the number of treasures he had was completely bizarre. When he had sent his clone to the Grand Xia, he had carried two mighty treasures with him; a top-grade Pure Yang treasure known as the 'Yin-Yang Arcane Ki Bottle', and a Protocosmic spirit-treasure known as the 'Nineleaf Snowlotus'.

"That's for the Godking and the other major powers to worry about," Blackheaven said coldly. "I trust that the Godking will quickly send an order as to whether or not we are to kill Ji Ning, so stop worrying your little head over it."

"Hmph." The azure-robed woman's face sank. She no longer said anything.

Blackheaven gave the azure-robed woman a glance, a hint of mockery in his eyes, then turned and left. He felt tremendous distaste for this Gatemaster of the Seamless Gate, Azurefox...because Violetgrass had died on her orders. As for any anger that the Gatemaster might feel towards him? He didn't care about it at all.

.....

The world of the Grand Xia.

Ning couldn't be bothered to worry about the Seamless Gate right now; it was Old Man Yuan that he was faced with, and he felt a headache coming.

Take him as his master?

He could tell that since Old Man Yuan had come to personally inspect him, the old man had definitely decided that Ning was moldable talent! Today, he had first asked Ning whether or not he should kill the forces of the Seamless Gate, and then immediately killed them upon Ning giving the nod. This caused Ning to feel quite delighted; clearly, Old Man Yuan wanted Ning to feel positively towards him.

And now, the old man had gifted him with the many treasures the Seamless Gate's forces had left behind; this, too, was to make Ji Ning feel grateful towards him.

Next, the old man had suggested that he work on applying heartforce to his legs or to his entire body; these words had indeed caused Ning to feel a desire to learn such a method.

Finally...he had asked Ning to accept him as his master.

"He's really put effort into this." Ning understood this. "It seems this Old Man Yuan really does want to take me as his disciple."

"This is how the world is. Some people desperately want to become a Daofather's disciple, yet never will. When I wanted to become Daofather Crimsonbright's disciple, he didn't find me worthy. Even Master Subhuti only accepted me as his disciple because he saw that I was the sole successor to the [Starseizing Hand] of his good friend, Daoist Threelives and a decent cultivator. Back then, although I was a genius, I clearly wasn't that attractive in the eyes of the Daofathers. Now that my power has increased dramatically, and have reached the Empyrean God level of power as a Void-level cultivator...one of the supreme Daofathers of the Three Realms has come to seek me out on his own accord.

If your potential was truly astonishing, the Daofathers would seek you out on their own accord.

Ning now was qualified for a Daofather to do so.

He truly was an astonishing piece of unpolished jade!

But...

"What should I do? What exactly should I do?" Ning hesitated.

"Is he a friend or a foe of my master, Subhuti? Or do they have no relationship at all?" This was what Ning was worrying about. "This Old Man Yuan killed the forces of the Seamless Gate, but the

Seamless Gate didn't even make a single peep about it; the major powers behind the Seamless Gate haven't responded or reacted at all. The Three Realms are facing a great storm, and there is no way that the major powers behind the Seamless Gate can possibly be frightened by Old Man Yuan. Clearly, then, Old Man Yuan is on passable terms with the Seamless Gate, while my teacher, Subhuti, is an enemy to them."

"What if Master Subhuti and Old Man Yuan are enemies?"

"If I were to apprentice myself to Old Man Yuan without getting Master Subhuti's permission...then in the future, how could I possibly face Master?" This was Ning's concern.

As the saying goes, the Dao is not to be lightly transmitted.

There was a saying regarding one who taught the Dao: One day as a teacher, a lifetime as a father. This meant that one was to revere and honor one's master as one would one's father. Subhuti had transmitted complete Fiendgod Body Refining techniques, Ki Refining Techniques, sword-arts manuals, and even supreme divine abilities like the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art], [Houyi's Archery], and the [Torch Dragon's Eye] to Ning.

For Ning's sake, he had even toiled painstakingly to create the [Obscuring Wind of the Nine Heavens] divine ability and the supreme sword-formation, the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation].

After Ning had been exiled into the Nihilum Zone, his master had come to search for him.

His master had shown him benevolence in transmitting the Dao to him and in saving his life...no matter what, if he was going to take on a new master, he first had to get the nod from Master Subhuti.

When Ning had expressed the desire to take part in the Conclave of Immortal Destiny in the hopes of being able to have a True Immortal

or a Daofather as his master, Immortal Diancai was in full agreement; naturally, he hoped that Ning would have even higher accomplishments. Before becoming Subhuti's apprentice, Ning had first spoken with the giant yellow bear, who had verified that Subhuti and Daoist Threelives had been good friends. If they had been enemies, things would've been tricky.

"Why are you hesitating and hemming and hawing?" The nearby Old Man Yuan frowned.

"Senior..." Ning said, "I need to get my master's permission, first."

"Your master?"

Old Man Yuan suddenly seemed to have thought of something. Laughing, he waved his hand.

Whoosh.

Someone suddenly appeared out of nowhere. It was Immortal Diancai, a winecup in his hands and a befuddled look on his face. Immortal Diancai had been seated atop his mountain, watching the dawn sun rise while drinking some Immortal wine. Who would've thought that he'd suddenly be teleported here?

"Disciple?" Immortal Diancai looked at Ning, then he looked at Old Man Yuan by Ning's side. Old Man Yuan's face changed, and his figure changed as well, becoming a bit thinner.

"MASTER!" Immortal Diancai instantly grew excited upon seeing him. Falling to his knees, he said excitedly, "Master, I've finally met you again!"

"Hey hey hey! Don't overstate our relationship," Old Man Yuan said hurriedly. "All those years ago, I saw that you were borderline suicidal, and also saw that you were decently talented, and so I took pity on you and casually transmitted a set of sword-arts to you. I have plenty of sword-arts in my possession, and so teaching you one of them didn't really mean anything. What's more, your talent is too

mediocre and your comprehension abilities are too weak; how could you possibly be qualified to call me 'Master'? You'd cause this old man to lose all face!"

He had first praised Immortal Diancai as 'decently talented', then immediately described him as 'mediocre' and 'weak'.

Still, everyone knew what he meant.

Clearly, Immortal Diancai would be considered decently talented when compared to the countless cultivators of the Three Realms, but he was far from being qualified to become Old Man Yuan's disciple.

Although these words were rather unpleasant, Immortal Diancai didn't feel the slightest bit of anger. Kneeling there, he said excitedly, "How could Diancai possibly forget the grace you have shown me by transmitting the Dao to me? I know that my talent is poor, and that I am not qualified to become your apprentice, but I've always viewed you as my master in my heart."

"You can think whatever you want, I guess. This, uh...this Ji Ning has a very close relationship with you. This old man wants to take him on as a disciple; help me persuade him," Old Man Yuan said.

"Disciple?" Immortal Diancai instantly revealed a look of great joy. He immediately looked towards Ning. "This senior possesses world-shaking power; even though I am now a Celestial Immortal, the sword-arts he transmitted to me were so unfathomably profound that I can tell I have still only scratched the surface of it. He must be a Daofather. Go ahead and take him on as your master; there are many people in the Three Realms who have multiple masters."

"Right, right, right! I'm a DAOFATHER!" Old Man Yuan looked at Ning, then stared at him. "I'm taking you on as my disciple! Why haven't you knelt down already?!"

"Senior, this junior feels unspeakably proud that you wish to take me on as your disciple," Ning said hurriedly. "But...this junior has

already taken on a Daofather as a master, and many people already know this. Without his approval, it isn't appropriate for this junior to accept you as master as well, senior."

"Oh, you are quite respectful towards this Daofather master of yours." Old Man Yuan laughed. "I guessed long ago that your master had to be a Daofather, and he's probably not too shabby either. Who is your master? Tell me, and I'll go talk to him about this. This merely the accepting of a new disciple, and I'm not asking you to betray him either. It's a minor matter. What is the name of your Daofather master?"

The Godking behind the Seamless Gate knew the answer, but Old Man Yuan did not. Indeed...the Seamless Gate's intelligence mechanisms were truly terrifying.

"Master's name is taboo; this junior does not dare speak it," Ning said honestly. Subhuti had ordered long ago that Ning was not permitted to tell others who his master was.

"You dumb cucumber! You can't even tell me your master's name? Is your master really that badass? Who the hell is your master, Nuwa?" Old Man Yuan stared at him with bulging eyes.

"I'm his master."

A calm voice rang out.

The nearby natural energy began to condense, and a skinny, white-bearded old man dressed in Daoist robes appeared out of nowhere.

Chapter 22 – A Graceful Departure

Yu Wei and Immortal Diancai suddenly felt spacetime around them began to change and blur. By the time their surroundings turned solid once more, they were now within a hallway next to Autumn Leaf. Upon seeing Immortal Diancai and Yu Wei suddenly appear, Autumn Leaf was quite startled. She immediately addressed the two: "Madame, Immortal Diancai."

"It seems they don't want us to watch," Immortal Diancai said with a helpless laugh.

"I wonder who junior apprentice-brother's master is." Yu Wei was curious as well.

Just now, they had only heard the words, 'I'm his master', before they were forcibly teleported away. They hadn't seen the man at all, much less learn who Ji Ning's master was.

"What happened?" Autumn Leaf was intrigued. "You said something about the young master's teacher?"

"Nothing." Yu Wei shook her head and smiled. "It's something good, but it's not something for us to know about."

"Oh." Autumn Leaf nodded, asking no further.

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"Master." Ning immediately called out with respect and excitement. The skinny, white-bearded elder in the Daoist robes smiled and nodded towards Ning, then looked towards Old Man Yuan.

"YOU!" Old Man Yuan's eyes bulged. "You cucumber! You friggin' cucumber! You ended up snatching away such a wonderful disciple!"

"This is the third time, you know." Patriarch Subhuti sighed. "Why do you always come after the disciples that I take in and teach?"

Ning blinked.

The third time?

It seemed as though Old Man Yuan had gone after two of his fellow disciples as well?

"Ahaha, all I can say is that you are formidable in teaching students, Subhuti." Old Man Yuan laughed, "Since it's you, Subhuti...that makes everything easy. We came to an agreement last time, right? Go ahead and tell me whatever it is that you want. This old man has plenty of treasures, and I'm willing to spend them. I'm not afraid of any demands that you might make."

"Ji Ning, are you willing?" Subhuti looked towards Ning.

"I'll follow your orders in all things, Master," Ning said respectfully. If it didn't make things tough for his master, there would be no issues. More importantly, Master Subhuti had to know more about Old Man Yuan than Ning did; Ning trusted that Master Subhuti wouldn't steer him wrong in this decision.

Subhuti nodded slightly.

"He can be both considered one of your disciples as well as one of mine," Subhuti said calmly. "I'm only going to ask one thing of you... that you stand with us, on our side."

"You..." Old Man Yuan's face became unsightly to behold.

Subhuti frowned. "Are you still unwilling to make your choice?"

"It's merely a matter of taking on a new a disciple, and I'm not even asking him to switch sides! He'll be our jointly shared disciple. If you want divine abilities or Protocosmic spirit-treasures, that's fine...but why are you trying to force me?" Old Man Yuan scratched his head. "Didn't things work out splendidly when little Peacock became my apprentice? She addresses both of us as 'master'!"

Ning was intrigued. Were they referring to senior apprentice-sister Peacock?

"Little Peacock?" Subhuti shook his head. "That was before the storm came, and before I knew it was coming. Now that the storm is already here...of course you have to make your choice. Otherwise, there's no way I'll permit my disciple to become apprenticed to you as well."

"How can you...you are absolutely...you old blockhead!" Old Man Yuan was infuriated.

"Hmph." Subhuti snorted coldly. "Then let me ask you this; if Ji Ning becomes your apprentice, and you end up joining the Seamless Gate...what is Ji Ning supposed to do? Is he supposed to choose to stand with me, or is he supposed to choose to stand with you? If he stands with the Seamless Gate, then I'll definitely strike and annihilate such a vile disciple! But if he stands with us, then you'll move to kill him as well. After all, by then it will be a life-and-death battle; no one will be able to escape it."

Old Man Yuan's face grew even uglier to behold now.

Ning, standing to one side, now understood everything.

Right. If he took on two masters who ended up in opposing, enemy camps...then no matter which side Ning was on, he would end up becoming enemies with one of his masters!

"If you want him to become your disciple, then I imagine you don't want to make things difficult for him; you don't want him to eventually be killed by one of his masters, right? That's why you have to stand with us; only by doing so will Ji Ning not suffer such a sad fate," Subhuti said. "So long as you agree...Ji Ning can take you on as master."

"You..." Old Man Yuan had a complicated look on his face.

Ning just stood there, watching quietly.

The Four Ancestors of the River Source; they were a formidable power within the Three Realms. Most likely, whichever side Old Man Yuan chose would be the side the Daofathers who followed him would choose.

"Why are you forcing me on this? This isn't just a personal matter; I have all my friends and disciples and grand-disciples to worry about." Old Man Yuan was truly upset now.

"There's nothing to negotiate!" Subhuti shook his head. "Don't make things difficult for Ji Ning."

"But didn't things work out perfectly when I took on little Peacock?" Old Man Yuan snapped back irritably.

"That's because you haven't made your choice yet. Once you do make your choice in the future...if you choose to join the Seamless Gate, little Peacock will have to make her choice as well. Will she follow you, or will she follow me?" Subhuti sighed. "I've already done wrong by little Peacock; I don't wish for Ji Ning to face the same tough situation in the future."

Old Man Yuan suddenly grew angry. "I don't get it. Why are all of you so damned stubborn?"

"I don't understand either! All of us were born from the same primordial chaos. We were like brothers! All of us are standing together now...why is it that you are roving about on your own? All four of you Four Ancestors of the River Source act in the exact same manner; you don't give a damn about your old friends and friendships." Subhuti was no longer calm either; in fact, he was so angry that his eyebrows were twitching, and as he spoke he pointed angrily at Old Man Yuan.

"The rest of you are in Nuwa's debt, but we aren't," Old Man Yuan replied angrily. "And Pangu's Primordial World shattered long ago. This is now the era of the Three Realms. That old, undying bastard just wants to take over the Three Realms; let him! Do you Daofathers

really care who is in control of the Three Realms? Do you have to risk everyone's lives over this question? You say that I don't care about old friends and friendships? If I didn't, I would've joined the Seamless Gate long ago!"

Subhuti was now truly enraged. "How can you be so..."

Their voices suddenly turned silent.

The distant figures of Patriarch Subhuti and Old Man Yuan's turned blurry as they angrily but silently yelled at, argued with, and cursed at each other.

Ning wasn't able to hear a single word of it.

"It seems...they don't want me to hear this." Ning mumbled to himself, "They said something about an 'old undying bastard' who 'wants to take over the Three Realms'...who? He must be a truly terrifying major power of the Three Realms."

Ning had no choice but to just stand there silently and watch. As for the two distant Daofathers...both of them were awe-inspiringly famous figures of the Three Realms who stood at the very pinnacle of power amongst Daofathers. Both had multiple Daofathers amongst their disciples, and both also had many Daofathers who were their resolute allies. Both possessed tremendous power in every sense of the word.

In addition, both were born from the primordial chaos of the universe.

And right now, they stood there arguing, each trying to convince the other.

.....

A long time passed...

The two Daofathers actually argued for two full hours. Towards the

end, Ning noticed that Patriarch Subhuti was growing increasingly imposing as he argued, while Old Man Yuan seemed to become increasingly less self-assured.

Boom! The area around him suddenly trembled. Now, Ning could once more hear the voices of the two Daofathers.

"Ji Ning."

Old Man Yuan charged over, an ugly look on his face. He snapped angrily, "That master of yours is like a big hunk of wood. You just can't talk to him! Those who walk different paths can't make plans together. I really can't be bothered to talk to him any longer. You are quite talented, kid; although that rotten blockhead is very skilled in some respects, he's complete crap in heartforce. Since we aren't destined to become master and disciple...then forget it! This is a technique for applying heartforce which I developed. Although it's not a complete system, it might be of help to you in some way. I'll give it to you as a gift!"

As he spoke, he pointed a finger towards Ning.

Instantly, a streak of light shot out from his finger into Ning's forehead.

An ocean of information instantly filled Ning's mind.

"Subhuti!" Old Man Yuan turned to point at Subhuti, then cursed, "In terms of fleeing abilities, you are number one in all the Three Realms! You'll be able to flee and survive, but how many of our other old friends will be able to survive? All those years ago, Threelives and the others all perished. How many more do you want dead?"

"If we retreat, even more will die. In fact, all of us might die!" Subhuti said angrily.

"Fine. Fine. Fine! We'll wait and see!"

The enraged Old Man Yuan turned and walked away.

After taking two steps away, the now-ordinary old gardener suddenly slumped supinely to the ground as a streak of light shot into the skies, disappearing.

Subhuti waved his hand, and the old gardener was instantly teleported away. He was nothing more than an ordinary old man, after all; prior to this, Old Man Yuan had simply been possessing him.

Subhuti walked towards Ning, who was completely filled and preoccupied with the enormous amount of information regarding the application of heartforce.

.....

It was awe-inspiring.

It was unfathomably profound.

When Ning viewed the awe-inspiring collection of information, he couldn't help but feel veneration towards Old Man Yuan. Incredible! Old Man Yuan's true power, however, most likely didn't lie in heartforce; after all, in terms of heartforce, Ning could tell that Old Man Yuan shouldn't be as powerful as Houyi had been.

Old Man Yuan, however, was different from Houyi.

Houyi was extremely focused on his archery, and he had systemized a way to apply heartforce to archery in a terrifyingly profound and powerful manner.

Old Man Yuan, however, was a jack of all trades. Most likely, he liked analyzing heartforce, and so had come up with multiple different heartforce techniques, some meant for the legs, some meant for the entire body, some meant for the fingers, some meant for the hair, some meant for the sword, some meant for other treasures...there were all sorts of techniques here! However, none of them were truly systemized; from the looks of it, Old Man Yuan had jotted down a few notes whenever inspiration struck him.

His most profound techniques regarding heartforce actually were in applying heartforce to the soul! This allowed the soul to control even more magic treasures. For example, if normally Ning was only able to control the third level of the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation], if he applied heartforce to his soul, he would be able to control the sixth level or even the seventh level. This was a technique which Ning was truly eager to learn.

Heartforce was like a marshal, with the soul being the soldiers; if one used them together properly, the number of magic treasures one could control would instantly explode. In addition, the amount of heartforce that was used up was negligible; after all, it merely served as a commander, without much of it being actually burned away. The increase in power, however, was still astonishing! This was definitely a killer technique for any Ki Refiner.

However...none of it was systemized, which meant that no one could simply 'learn' the technique after reading about it.

Still...

Ning wasn't an uninformed outsider to this art.

He was someone who, after learning how to apply heartforce through [Houyi's Archery], had first come up with a way to apply heartforce to his sword-fingers, then come up with a way to apply heartforce to his swords! Ning was capable of creating these techniques himself; now, after having seen the more profound techniques of Old Man Yuan, he was of course stimulated by them and had new insights. These insights would absolutely be enough to allow Ning to come up with a suitable method for applying heartforce to his legs or to his entire body, or even to his soul.

Aside from Old Man Yuan's own techniques, there were also techniques which other major powers had devised for the application of heartforce.

All these non-systemized heartforce techniques...this collection was

known as the [Heart Sutra].

"The [Heart Sutra]? With this [Heart Sutra], I'll be able to grow dramatically more powerful in every aspect, whether it be dodging in close combat, fleeing, or anything else. My Primaltwin will become more powerful as well." Ning was unspeakably excited right now. Before this, he was only formidable in his attacks; he was quite lacking in other respects. Thus, almost any Empyrean God or True Immortal would probably be able to capture him.

Now, however, Ning would be able to improve himself in every area. He would no longer have any obvious weaknesses, and so capturing him would become far more difficult in the future.

"Wow." Ning opened his eyes, a look of delight on his face.

As he did so...he saw his master, Patriarch Subhuti, standing not too far away from him. Ning's face quickly stiffened.

"Master," Ning immediately called out.

Chapter 23 – Before The Tribulation

Ji Ning's heart clenched. He could tell that there were some disagreements between his master, Subhuti, and Old Man Yuan. Was his master going to forbid him from training in the [Heart Sutra]?

"What did Old Man Yuan transmit to you?" Subhuti asked.

"The [Heart Sutra]." Ning didn't dare to hide this. "It contains his many experiences with various heartforce application techniques, as well as a mix of heartforce application techniques from a few other Daofathers. However, they are all un-systemized...but they will still be of great benefit to me, especially the one that applies to using heartforce on the soul. It will be of tremendous help to me in controlling the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation] as well as in overcoming the demonheart tribulation."

Subhuti gave Ning a glance, then revealed a calm smile. "Your master isn't the pedantic, unflexible sort; since Daofather Yuan has gifted you with this sutra, and since he hasn't forced you to become his disciple...go ahead and learn from it! If in the future, Daofather Yuan decides to stand with us, you shall naturally repay his kindness. If, however, he stands with the Seamless Gate...then when a war to the death erupts between our two alliances, you'd have to fight against him with all your might. This would be true even if he really was your master, to say nothing of him merely having transmitted a technique!"

Ning's heart shivered. He immediately said, "Your disciple understands."

This was a storm!

A storm which no one would be able to avoid.

"I hope senior Old Man Yuan decides to stand with us," Ning mused secretly to himself. Everyone who he owed a debt of gratitude to,

such as the former Lord of Cui Palace who had been the First Judge of the Dead and who had transmitted the [Nuwa Painting] to him, belonged to the side of the Nuwa Alliance. Even the master he had never met, Daoist Threelives, had also been on the side of Nuwa. The same was true for the seven Empyrean Gods of the Starseizing world, to say nothing of Patriarch Subhuti, Daofather Crimsonbright, and the Xia Emperor.

There was also already a feud between himself and the Seamless Gate...and Ning had a true disliking for the way in which the Seamless Gate had acted in seeking to conquer the universe. Once they took over the Three Realms, not only would they pay no attention to maintaining any order, they would instigate countless battles and massacres.

"This Old Man Yuan truly is an extremely formidable figure," Subhuti said to Ning. "His power is most likely no lower than mine, and he loves to analyze and research many different types of techniques. He's a master in many areas, and in heartforce he is second only to Houyi. In terms of how many heartforce skills he knows, he's even superior to Houyi. Spend some effort on this [Heart Sutra], especially in the part that shows you how to apply heartforce to your soul. You must gain insight into it; once you do, your chances of overcoming the Empyrean Tribulation and shall increase by quite a bit."

"Your disciple understands." Ning nodded.

Heartforce as the general, the soul as the soldiers.

Once the general commanded the soldiers to unleash their power in an organized fashion, he would be able to control even more magic treasures while also making it harder for the demonheart tribulation to invade his mind. Against a weak soul, it was easy to create a terrifying demonheart illusion, but against one with a powerful soul, it would be far more difficult. In fact, there were some truly terrifying souls that were so powerful that the demonheart illusions were completely unable to take hold against them.

Once Ning learned the art of applying heartforce to his soul, his soul would instantly become more than ten times steadier. This, in turn, would dramatically lessen the power of the demonheart illusions generated by the 'demonheart tribulation' of his Empyrean Tribulation.

"Your disciple has a subconscious feeling...if I am able to master this soul heartforce technique, my Primaltwin will be in virtually no danger during the Celestial Tribulation," Ning said. "Should your disciple delay the tribulation?"

"No need." Subhuti shook his head.

Ning looked at his master, puzzled.

"If you wait until you've mastered the soul heartforce technique, your Primaltwin's tribulation will indeed be very easy." Subhuti nodded. "But...first of all, it's hard to say how long it would take you to come up with such a technique; after all, there's a tremendous difference between applying heartforce to the soul and applying heartforce to sword-fingers. Second, although your Primaltwin's tribulation is indeed a tribulation, it's also an excellent and rare opportunity to temper yourself."

"Temper myself?" Ning was intrigued.

"After having withstood the karmic sinflames, your heartforce improved dramatically," Subhuti said. "By the same principle...your Primaltwin's demonheart tribulation will be a tempering experience as well that will allow your heartforce to improve in strength and your Dao-heart to grow even more resolute. If you wait until you come up with a soul heartforce technique before you attempt the tribulation, ending up in an excessively easy tribulation, it won't have any tempering effect on you."

"Remember this."

"Your Primaltwin's tribulation is a minor matter. What really matters

for you should be your true body's tribulation." Subhuti looked at Ning. "Your true body has trained in many divine abilities, and its potential is far greater than your Primaltwin's. After all...compared to Fiendgods, Ki Refiners are always at a significant disadvantage. If you look at the Three Realms, all of the most supreme of powers of the Three Realms have powerful divine bodies."

"Threelives, for example; he clearly didn't master a Heavenly Dao, but was still able to kill many Daofathers." Subhuti looked at Ning. "Or for example, you; even if your Primaltwin becomes a Pure Yang True Immortal, it will still most likely be merely an average Pure Yang True Immortal. But once your true body becomes an Empyrean God, you'll instantly become one of the most supreme Empyrean Gods or True Immortals. If you spend a bit of time training, you'll probably come extremely close to Lu Dongbin's level. That's the advantage which Fiendgods have! Look at the most famous figures of the Three Realms; Houyi, Nuwa, Pangu, Old Man Yuan, and yes, myself; which of them trained solely as Ki Refiners?"

Ning nodded.

"The more monstrously talented you are, the more terrifying your tribulation will be. Even I can't be certain as to how powerful your Empyrean Tribulation shall be. All I know is that it will definitely be shocking." Subhuti looked towards Ning. "Thus...the most important thing for you right now is to focus all of your efforts towards preparing for your Empyrean Tribulation."

"Your disciple understands," Ning said solemnly. "Three days from now, your disciple's Primaltwin will undergo the tribulation."

"Good." Subhuti nodded with satisfaction. "If you succeed in this tribulation and your Primaltwin becomes a Celestial Immortal, your Dao-heart shall be further strengthened. This would naturally be an ideal outcome. However, even if you fail and lose your Primaltwin... you'll have at least experienced the demonheart tribulation. If you end up failing it, it'll have been of even greater help to you in terms of tempering yourself."

Ning nodded.

Everything was for the sake of his true body!

"Shall I still go to Daofather Crimsonbright's place for the tribulation?" Ning asked.

"No need." Subhuti shook his head. "Undergoing the Celestial Tribulation is a major matter; naturally, as your master, I will ensure that you won't suffer any disturbances during your tribulation. I was always planning to guard you while you underwent your tribulation. I didn't expect that you'd go seek out that kid Xiamang."

Not even Subhuti could keep the [Dream of the Three Realms] up at all times. Subhuti only found out about Ning speaking to Xiamang after the fact.

"You can undergo it here at Swallow Mountain," Subhuti said. "Don't worry about anything. I won't show myself, but I definitely won't let anyone disturb you."

"Thank you, Master," Ning immediately said.

"This Celestial Tribulation is nothing more than a tempering experience for you; don't waste it. Your Empyrean Tribulation is what truly matters," Subhuti said solemnly.

Upon becoming an Empyrean God, Ning would have become one of the truly formidable figures of the Three Realms.

"Calm yourself and prepare for your Celestial Tribulation. Although this Celestial Tribulation isn't as important as your true body's Empyrean Tribulation, it will still be extraordinary." Subhuti smiled, then vanished into thin air, no longer anywhere to be seen.

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Ning continued his preparations here at Swallow Mountain. He spent a little bit of time to pay a visit to the Xia Emperor, informing

him that his own Daofather master was going to protect him, and so there was no need to trouble Daofather Crimsonbright. The Xia Emperor had nodded; if there was no need to bother his master, all the better.

During these three days prior to his tribulation, Ning paid a visit to West Prefecture City, where he had spent his early childhood days. He visited the Eastmount Marshes he had once adventured through, went to the mountains where he had once killed Bei Zishan...and as he retraced his steps, Ning felt his heart grow calmer and calmer.

This was a day on the cusp between spring and summer. The early dawn was very cool and refreshing.

Within a solitary mountain peak in the Swallow Mountain region, Ning's true body and his black-robed Primaltwin were seated together in the lotus position, a hint of dew on their bodies. They had sat here all night, their minds and hearts as calm as still water. Far away, on a distant mountain peak, stood Uncle White, Little Qing, Mu Northson, Immortal Diancai, Autumn Leaf, and the pregnant Yu Wei. They all watched nervously...because Ji Ning was about to undergo his Celestial Tribulation.

Chapter 24 -The Tribulation

Uncle White, Autumn Leaf, Mu Northson, and the others watching from far away were all extremely nervous. Immortal Diancai immediately said consolingly to them, "I was able to successfully overcome my tribulation. This disciple of mine is more powerful than me, even as I am right now, and his Primaltwin is merely a Ki Refiner; I trust his Celestial Tribulation won't be too powerful. He'll definitely succeed in overcoming it."

"Right." They all nodded, including Yu Wei. However, Yu Wei still felt restlessness in her heart. This was because she had been an apprentice to Patriarch Lu; she knew very well that Patriarch Lu's tribulation had been one with nine nine-sets of thunder tribulation; clearly, Ki Refiners could also encounter incredibly terrifying Celestial Tribulations.

Whoooosh.

Atop the distant, solitary mountain peak, Ning's true body which had been seated in the lotus position suddenly vanished. He had entered the underwater estate, leaving behind only the black-robed Primaltwin Ning, who still continued to sit there.

The golden-lotus Primal within the black-robed Ning's body began to undergo its final breakthrough. It surged to the peak of the Void-level and began to actively call out for the Celestial Tribulation to descend...

Whooooosh. Whoooosh. Whooooosh.

A wind arose.

"It's begun."

"The wind tribulation."

"The Celestial Tribulation has started." Immortal Diancai and the

others all stared nervously.

Everything had been completely calm before this, but suddenly a gale erupted out of nowhere, forming into wind-blades that grew increasingly small in size. The wind-blades changed in color, growing increasingly powerful as they became tiny black knives, each of which was comparable to an Immortal-ranked magic treasure.

"The start to the wind tribulation is already this powerful..." The looks on the faces of Immortal Diancai and Yu Wei changed. They had both undergone tribulations and had past experience to rely on; it was obvious to them that the Primaltwin Ning's Celestial Tribulation was starting off at an excessive level of power. It vastly surpassed theirs, at least!

The seated, black-robed Ning just watched calmly. In a soft voice, he called out, "Nineleaf, come out."

Instantly, an enormous, snowy-white lotus treasure appeared beneath the seated Ning. If one looked at it carefully, one would see that it had a total of nine snowy-white lotus petals. This was the most powerful magic treasure which Celestial Immortal Blackheaven had prepared for the Seamless Gate's assault against Brightheart Island...the Protocosmic spirit-treasure, 'Nineleaf Snowlotus'.

The Nineleaf Snowlotus was incredibly powerful, and it was best-suited for trapping and binding foes! Even if it was ownerless, the Nineleaf Snowlotus could activate the cold elemental energy of the natural world to form tiny snowlotus petals to wildly assault and constrict its foes. And if it did have a master who filled it with elemental ki...its power would be even more astonishing.

Blackheaven had been planning to rely on this Protocosmic spirit-treasure to bind Ning! From this, one could tell how powerful it was.

When Old Man Yuan had wiped out all the forces of the Seamless Gate, he had given Ning all of the treasures the Seamless Gate had left behind. The Pure Yang treasures weren't as important for now,

and Ning was in no rush to parcel them out to Yu Wei or the others; after all, his tribulation was coming soon, and he had his master to protect him, meaning that this period of time would be very safe. The parcelling out of the treasures could wait for after the tribulation.

As for the Nineleaf Snowlotus, Ning had bound it to himself.

This sort of treasure was tremendously helpful towards Ning, and binding it could also be quite difficult; it depended on whether or not the Protocosmic spirit-treasure was willing to accept the new master or not. The Nineleaf Snowlotus naturally had a spirit of its own, one which took the form of a white-robed girl. The white-robed girl was persuaded by the Rahu Bow and the giant bear of the underwater estate...and given that Ji Ning was indeed a monstrous talent, and that she had seen a Daofather strike out on behalf of Ning, she quickly accepted and acknowledged Ning as her master. As a result, Ning was able to easily bind this Protocosmic spirit-treasure.

If the Nineleaf Snowlotus had been unwilling, binding her would've been a true pain; most likely, only a Pure Yang True Immortal would've been able to bind her forcibly, after spending an enormous amount of time.

However, once she became willing, Ning was able to effortlessly bind her.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Ning was now enthroned on his Nineleaf Snowlotus. Countless snowflakes appeared around him, each of which had the form of a tiny little snowlotus leaf. In the thousands and tens of thousands, they completely surrounded Ning and protected the area around him. Although they were best-suited for wrapping around and binding a foe en masse, they could also be used to defend. If they had to protect a large space, their defensive power would drop a bit, but since the treasure was as a Protocosmic spirit-treasure, its power

was still quite extraordinary.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!!!!

Countless Immortal swords appeared around Ning, hovering in the air around him and ensconcing him within. Although Ning had already activated a Protocosmic spirit-treasure...to be completely safe, he released all of his Immortal swords, preparing to defend if necessary.

Rumble...

First came the roaring gale.

Next came all sorts of terrifying skywinds with astonishing power.

Still...no matter how powerful the assaults were, the Nineleaf Snowlotus Protocosmic spirit-treasure was able to endure them all. Ning wasn't even needed to use his sword-formations at all.

"The final assault of the wind tribulation has come, the Celestial Immortal Wind." Immortal Diancai and the other distant spectators all felt their hearts clench.

The Celestial Immortal Wind was formless and invisible; no magic treasures or spells could block it.

Whoosh!

The Celestial Immortal Wind descended, effortlessly bypassing the defending Nineleaf Snowlotus. It passed through Ning's skin, going straight into the Sole-Ki Pearl of Primalwater within Ning's Primaltwin. Ordinary people usually had this wind entering through their head, but since Ning's Primaltwin was created from this Sole-Ki Pearl of Primalwater. Still...in the face of the Celestial Immortal Wind, it seemed incredibly fragile.

Celestial Immortal Wind would only ever appear during the Celestial Tribulation. It was a manifestation of the Dao that flowed through

the Three Realms, and no power or magic treasure could oppose it. If one's Dao-heart was not strong enough, the Celestial Immortal Wind would incinerate one's body and reduce it to ash.

Thus...one's Dao-heart had to be firm.

Ning had managed to overcome the karmic sinflames tribulation; how could his Dao-heart be weak? He could sense the Zifu region within his Sole-Ki Pearl of Primalwater begin to tremble, then transform. The pearl itself was being transformed. Once he truly became a Celestial Immortal...the pearl would completely vanish, and the true core of his Primaltwin would become a golden pellet, his Jindan.

.....

The wind tribulation ended. The fire tribulation came.

The weather changed dramatically as an utterly enormous cloud of fire appeared in the skies, causing the temperature to skyrocket. However, Ning continued to simply sit there above the Nineleaf Snowlotus. Just by using a little bit of his elemental energy, he was able to activate a large amount of energy of the natural world to cause the temperature to cool once more. For a time, the world was divided between a blazing sky high above and a world of snow down below. Truly, this was a case where fire and snow could not coexist.

"The fire tribulation has come. However...since that protective treasure Ning has was able to easily defend against the wind tribulation, I trust it won't be too hard for it to resist the fire tribulation." Immortal Diancai smiled.

"The power of the wind tribulation is comparable to the power of the fire tribulation. Given how formidable junior apprentice-brother's protective treasure is, he should be able to easily overcome it without using up too much energy." Yu Wei said with concern, "What I'm worried about is the thunder tribulation."

Indeed.

The power of the Protocosmic spirit-treasure, the Nineleaf Snowlotus, was truly astonishing. It didn't require too much energy to be used up, but alas, Ning didn't have a way to apply his heartforce through the Nineleaf Snowlotus. If he did, not even his swords might be as powerful as the Nineleaf Snowlotus. This was a Protocosmic spirit-treasure, after all; although Ning had many hundreds of Immortal swords, and although the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation] was incredibly powerful, they were still 'merely' top-grade Immortal swords. But of course...Ning had come up with a way to apply heartforce through his swords of the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation], and so at present the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation] far surpassed the Nineleaf Snowlotus in power.

He had passed the wind tribulation!

He now passed the fire tribulation as well! The Celestial Immortal Fire that came in the end resulted in the Sole-Ki Pearl of Primalwater evolving yet again.

Finally...the time came for the thunder tribulation.

.....

There was a fairly long period of time that would pass between the end of the fire tribulation and the start of the thunder tribulation. The Celestial Tribulation gave the tribulant some time to restore their energy...but in truth, in this case Ning had primarily relied on the Nineleaf Snowlotus to defend against the elemental attacks, and had used his Dao-heart to endure the Celestial Immortal Wind and Celestial Immortal Fire. Thus, he had used up very little of his energy.

"I wonder how many sets of thunder tribulation Master will face," Little Qing said worriedly.

"I underwent six nine-sets," Immortal Diancai said with concern. "This disciple of mine had far more karmic luck than I did, and he also has karmic sinflames around him; his thunder tribulation shall undoubtedly be astonishing."

All of them were worried. What none of them realized...

Was that in truth, Ji Ning had received supreme transmissions of the Dao from three Daofather-level figures; Patriarch Subhuti, Daoist Threelives, and Old Man Yuan. Of the three, Old Man Yuan and Patriarch Subhuti both stood at the very pinnacle of power amongst the Daofathers of the Three Realms. While Daoist Threelives had never been able to actually become a Daofather, remaining a True God of Primordial Chaos, the [Starseizing Hand] divine ability was awe-inspiringly powerful and one of the top ten divine abilities of the Three Realms.

Ning had acquired so many legacies that even his Ki Refiner tribulation wouldn't be weak...and he also had mastered heartforce and was covered in karmic sinflames.

An hour passed.

Rumble...

The calm skies suddenly manifested a pair of enormous black clouds. These enormous black clouds covered nearly the entire sky, causing the world to turn pitch-black as they blocked out almost all light.

"What just happened?"

"The sky turned dark?"

The Ji clansmen within Swallow Mountain, as well as the other clansmen and monsters present, all stared towards the sky in confusion.

The entire sky had turned pitch-black. As for the dark clouds...they

had now completely covered the entire Swallow Mountain area of nearly a hundred thousand kilometers!

"How could this..." Yu Wei, Immortal Diancai, Mu Northson, Uncle White, Little Qing, and Autumn Leaf all raised their heads. They had changed looks on their faces, while Yu Wei's face was completely bloodless.

The two enormous dark clouds that had blotted out the skies above all of Swallow Mountain slowly began to move towards each other. Because of how enormous they were, these two massive clouds seemed to fly at a very slow pace. But as they flew...crack! Crack! A series of cracking sounds could be heard from the skies as one enormous bolt of lightning after another began to snake out from within the two massive dark clouds.

Ning, however, just watched calmly.

He wasn't surprised at all.

Soon, an enormous vortex of lightning and clouds had formed within the skies. The size of this vortex still covered the entire Swallow Mountain region; from its size alone, one could tell how utterly astonishing its power was.

BOOM!

A streak of lightning lashed out from the lightning-cloud vortex, striking directly down like the sword of the heavens.

Clang!

Ning had already risen to his feet. Hundreds of Immortal swords hovered around him, while the Nineleaf Snowlotus was underneath him. Many hundreds of meters above Ning, an utterly enormous lotus had formed, generated from countless tiny snowlotus petals. The enormous lotus was a barrier to defend against the thunder tribulation. Ning still wanted to use this Protocosmic spirit-treasure; it consumed very little of his elemental ki, after all.

BOOM! The first bolt of lightning wasn't even able to cause the Protocosmic spirit-treasure to shake in the slightest.

Bolts of lightning continued to crash down.

Soon, they were at the fourth nine-set of thunderbolts.

Thunderbolts continued to crash down.

Five nine-sets. Six nine-sets...

"This is the seventh nine-set." Autumn Leaf couldn't help but whisper these words. Brightheart Island now had quite an extensive library of books, many of which Ning had acquired after killing other Immortals. Autumn Leaf had naturally perused them.

"Master is almost at his limit." Little Qing was worried as well.

This was the sixty-first bolt of thunder.

The enormous lotus flower formed from the Nineleaf Snowlotus was already beginning to collapse.

"[Greater Thousand Swords Formation], go forth!" The black-robed Ning, standing atop the Nineleaf Snowlotus, pointed towards the skies. Instantly, a golden sword that had manifested in front of his chest streaked out into the heavens.

BOOM!

The enormous lotus above him had already vanished into thin air. However, a series of layers of lotus flowers appeared around the black-robed Ning.

This strike of the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation] contained a hint of his heartforce, allowing him to effortlessly block the celestial thunder.

"The eighth nine-set has arrived."

Soon, it was time for the eighth nine-set. Immortal Diancai and the other spectators all felt nervous; how was it that a Ki Refiner actually caused an eighth nine-set to appear? Even though Ning had taken on a Daofather as his master, his tribulation shouldn't be this terrifying, right?

Chapter 25 – A New Life

The seventieth bolt of thunder.

A violet streak of lightning crashed down with ice-cold callousness. The black-robed Ji Ning beneath it pointed with his finger, causing the golden sword of the [Greater Thousand Swords Formation] to once more soar into the skies.

Rumble...

It once more blocked the assault.

"I hope it is merely eight nine-sets. If it grows much stronger...it may put too much stress on my heartforce." Ning was a bit worried as well. Third-level heartforce was very powerful, and it would be easy to use it against eight nine-sets, but if it became the full nine nine-sets...the power of the thunder would skyrocket to a new level. By then, each blow would most likely require Ning to use up quite a bit of his heartforce. Once it was used up, he would definitely perish.

Ning had never imagined that he would have failed during the thunder tribulation of the Celestial Tribulation, but he was now beginning to worry. The power of the eighth nine-set was already a bit beyond what he had expected.

Boom!

Boom!

The divine thunder grew increasingly powerful. After these two consecutive blows of divine thunder...everyone, be it Ning or the distant group of spectators including Immortal Diancai and Yu Wei, stared upwards nervously.

"This is merely junior apprentice-brother's Primaltwin. Eight nine-sets should be enough; there shouldn't be nine nine-sets, right?"

"The legendary nine nine-sets...generally speaking, only Void-level Fiendgods will encounter them."

They all watched nervously.

Thousands of kilometers away, an old man in Daoist robes was watching from atop a distant mountain peak. When he saw that the tribulation clouds in the sky did not disperse, and instead began to gather an even more terrifying amount of power, his face changed. He murmured softly to himself, "My disciple's Primaltwin has actually encountered the ninth nine-set?"

"It's just a Primaltwin. In terms of fortuitous encounters, it probably isn't even up to Lu Dongbin's standard...can this be due to the karmic sinflames?" Subhuti began to worry.

Ning was a monster, but that was with regards to his true body.

His Primaltwin, by comparison...although it had control over heartforce, it was far inferior in all other aspects to the Void-level Lu Dongbin of countless years ago. Although heartforce was powerful, it had a glaring weakness: It could only be used to fight for a short period of time. Once one's heartforce was used up, one's power would drop dramatically.

For Ning's Primaltwin to encounter nine nine-sets of thunder tribulation...Subhuti felt that this was too excessive, even though Ning did have karmic sinflames covering him.

"If this is the case...then my disciple's true body...?" Subhuti began to worry.

If even the Primaltwin had to undergo nine nine-sets, then the Empyrean Tribulation of the true body would be...

"Once he becomes an Empyrean God, he will quickly reach the pinnacle of power amongst Empyrean Gods. In fact, after he undergoes a bit more tempering, he'll be like Houyi was, capable of rivaling the Daofathers despite merely being at the Empyrean God

level." Subhuti let out a soft sigh. "It seems not even the heavens are willing to casually permit such a monstrous genius like this to exist. The heavens will insist on unleashing a terrifying tribulation..."

From the era of Pangu's World to the modern day, countless monsters had their souls shattered by their tribulations!

"Forget about the Empyrean Tribulation; even this Celestial Tribulation..." Subhuti stared off into the distance, a frown on his face.

"Nine nine-sets!"

"There's more?!"

"How can this be?!"

Immortal Diancai, Mu Northson, Autumn Leaf, Uncle White, Little Qing, and Yu Wei all revealed frantic looks on their faces. There was no way they could help Ning; during the Celestial Tribulation, a person could only rely on himself.

"Junior apprentice-brother, you have to succeed." Yu Wei gently stroked her belly, her eyes filled with hope.

"Ji Ning."

"Young master."

They were all filled with hope. Although the fame of the ninth nine-set was terrifying, Ning had overcome the previous eight nine-sets with utter ease, not seeming to be taxed by them at all. Thus...they were still filled with hope.

Boom!

The ninth nine-set of the thunder tribulation. The seventy-third bolt of thunder was a streak of violet lightning that was tinged with a white color. This hint of white caused the thunderbolt to become

beautiful, a terrible beauty to behold. It was as though the lord of all creation had just taken a look at his universe with a gaze that of ineffable power. Weaker Void-level Earth Immortals probably wouldn't even try to fight back against this thunderbolt...but of course, there was no way a weak Void-level Earth Immortal would even be able to make it this far, to the ninth nine-set of the thunder tribulation.

In all the Three Realms, in all of history, every single person who had encountered nine nine-sets was an extraordinary figure. They wouldn't easily admit defeat; even if they had to die, they would die standing.

"Go." Ning pointed into the distance, and the golden sword in front of his chest once more flew out. While flying out, Ning manifested yet another golden sword in front of himself.

Clang!

As the first golden sword flew out, it was struck head-on by the violet-white thunderbolt and broken apart.

"It seems I have to use one-fiftieth of my total heartforce in order to completely block these attacks. The power of the divine thunder truly has risen significantly." Ning hurriedly commanded his second golden sword to fly out, blocking the remaining power of the violet-white thunderbolt. "The power of these thunderbolts are greater than the full-strength blows of the likes of Celestial Immortal Infatuation. How could an ordinary Void-level Earth Immortal possibly withstand them?"

Only by accurately predicting the power of each thunderbolt could Ning ensure that he wasn't wasting too much of his heartforce with each blow.

"He blocked the seventy-third thunderbolt."

"He blocked the first bolt of the ninth nine-set!" Immortal Diancai

and the others revealed looks of excitement and nervousness in their eyes. There was a huge increasing in power between the last bolt of the eighth nine-set and the first bolt of the ninth nine-set; for him to be able to block this first bolt meant that there was hope for him to block the others.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

One bolt of lightning after another came crashing down.

All the thunderbolts were violet-white in color, but towards the end, the white grew more and more dominant, and the power grew increasingly greater. In turn, Ning was forced to use up more and more of his heartforce.

The seventy-ninth bolt!

The eightieth!

"There's one more left."

"The last one."

Yu Wei, Uncle White, and the others felt as though their hearts were hanging in the air. The legendary nine nine-sets of thunder tribulation...finally, the last blow of it was going to reveal its force. Not everyone was lucky enough to witness such a thing. However, their hearts were only filled with a dim, vague fear...because the very sight of the cloud-lightning vortex swirling above them was filling them with inexplicable terror.

"Even if it was me...the current me, who has become a Celestial Immortal long ago...I would probably die beneath this below," Immortal Diancai mused to himself.

.....

Ning stood there at the very peak of the mountain, like a sharp sword unfurled towards the heavens. Beneath his feet was the

Nineleaf Snowlotus, and lotus flowers swirled and bloomed all around him. Hundreds of swords levitated around him, all pointed towards the heavens as Ning raised his head, staring at the tribulation clouds.

The final thunderbolt.

The final bolt of the ninth nine-set of the thunder tribulation.

BOOM!!!!

It was a thunderbolt of pure white, filled with holiness and sanctity. It didn't have even the slightest hint of wildness or savagery; all it held was an exalted, noble aura within it as it came crushing down from the heavens. This was the true face of the very final thunderbolt of the ninth nine-set.

"Go." Ning pointed a finger.

Swoosh!

The golden sword-light flashed with incomparable brilliance, expanding to become an enormous sword that instantly shot into the heavens, striking towards that pure-white thunderbolt.

"Go." As fast as Ning could, Ning manifested and unleashed a second golden sword. By now, the first golden sword he had sent towards the white thunderbolt had already been completely blasted apart. The second golden sword quickly soared upwards. BOOM! The remnants of the pure-white thunderbolt trembled, and then completely dispersed.

The enormous golden sword continued on its upwards trajectory, stabbing straight into the heart of the cloud-lightning vortex in the skies, completely dispersing the entire vortex.

One last streak of lightning suddenly appeared out of nowhere, crashing into Ning's body.

Ning's body began to emit an Immortal aura.

"Celestial Immortal Body." The distant spectators, including Immortal Diancai, Yu Wei, and Autumn Leaf, began to call out in excitement.

"Success."

"Nine nine-sets of thunder tribulation...the legendary nine nine-sets! Master actually withstood it!"

"So the final bolt from the ninth nine-set is actually a bolt of completely white lightning. Why did that white bolt of thunder seem so holy and noble? I felt the urge to bow towards it."

.....

Ning looked at Uncle White, Yu Wei, Immortal Diancai, and rest of his distant, celebrating friends. He revealed a smile...but still felt a hint of lingering fear in his heart. "The nine nine-sets were simply too terrifying. I've been very stingy with my heartforce, but I still have less than thirty percent of it left. That final thunderbolt in particular...even my full-strength sword-strike was unable to withstand it!"

"If the thunder tribulation is already so frightening...then what of the demonheart tribulation?"

Ning had a bad feeling.

Although this was merely his Primaltwin's tribulation, the power of the Celestial Tribulation had still exceeded his expectations. The demonheart tribulation coming up would probably also be as powerful as the most terrifying ones in the legends.

.....

"It's a boy! It's a boy!" A distorted voice suddenly rang out in Ning's mind, summoning his memories.

Ning opened his eyes.

A giant dressed in white furs was holding him. The white-furred giant ordered, "The rest of you can leave!"

"Father!" The face of the giant caused Ning's heart to tremble. Ning immediately turned to look towards one side. He immediately saw a body covered with sweat that lay on an enormous, fur-draped bed.

"Mother! I...did I just go back to the moment of my birth?"

Time passed, one day after the another.

Ning once more lived life in West Prefecture City. Under his father's protection, he began to train. Although Ning had all his memories, he still had to undergo normal training. Still, although the demonheart world had given him a weak body, it was unable to change Ning's memories or his Dao-heart. Thus...Ning knew very well that this was the demonheart world!

However, even though he knew it, he wasn't able to do anything about it, because there was no way for him to leave this world at all. He had to wait for the demonheart tribulation to come to an end; only then would this demonheart world come to an end as well.

.....

Ning slowly grew up.

Because he did possess all of his memories, Ning was able to train very quickly within this demonheart world. In addition, he had control over his heartforce; third level heartforce was simply too powerful! Thus, although he was a child of less than ten years of age, his power was no weaker than that of a supreme Celestial Immortal's. Thus...everything was changed. In the demonheart world, he had to train normally as a Fiengod Body Refiner, but his training speed as a Ki Refiner was incredibly fast. With the assistance of his powerful heartforce, he was naturally able to acquire Immortal spirit-pills. He became a Void-level Earth Immortal by age nine,

procuring spirit-pills for his mother, Yuchi Snow, that would allow her to continue to live.

A nine year old Void-level Earth Immortal.

What an utter monster.

Within the demonheart world, Ning continued to hide his control over heartforce. The fact that he was a Void-level Earth Immortal, however, could not be hidden. And so, just like that, a nine year old Void-level Earth Immortal emerged into the world of the Grand Xia. His status was so special that even the Northmont clan of Stillwater sent someone over to recruit him. The Xia Emperor, however, ignored him. This was because the Xia Emperor believed that this Ji Ning had to be the disciple of a major power, which was why he possessed all of his memories immediately after being reincarnated and born again. As someone who had all of his former memories, to become a Void-level Earth Immortal at age nine wasn't that unheard of.

Still...the entire situation within Stillwater Commandery had changed.

Ning's status became more and more transcendent. And yet...out of habit, Ning kept the form of a youth.

"Ning, son, a disciple of the Black-White College named Ninelotus has come to pay you a visit." Yuchi Snow, already a Zifu Disciple herself, smiled as she spoke to her son. Now that Ning's status within Stillwater Commandery was so transcendent, many people came to pay their respects to him. As for their enemies such as Snowdragon Mountain, Ning had wiped them out long ago.

"Ninelotus?" Ning's heart trembled. In the demonheart world, he hadn't even visited the Black-White College yet; why had Ninelotus come?

Chapter 26 – Another Life, Thirty Millenia

Within the demonheart world. Out of curiosity, Ninelotus had come to meet Ji Ning. By now, Ninelotus had already grown up to be a slender, elegant beauty. As soon as she saw Ning, for some inexplicable reason, she felt close to him. Ning, however, felt guarded; no matter what, he absolutely could not allow himself to sink down into this demonheart world. ‘Sinking down into it’ meant liking this world and accepting it in his heart.

To like the demonheart world so much that he might abandon the real world...

To allow himself to drown within it, to allow his real self in the real world to perish!

Within this demonheart world, his parents were both alive and well. This was a world without tragedy for him. In truth, in his heart, Ning did like this world...but thankfully, he had reached the third level of heartforce, ‘ruler’. No matter what thoughts, likes, and emotions flashed through his mind, Ning remained the master of himself. He constantly reminded himself that these were all nothing more than the illusions of the demonheart world; these weren’t real.

“The feelings I bear for my parents are already having a tremendous impact on me within the demonheart world. I absolutely cannot allow my feelings for Ninelotus and Yu Wei to be added to the mix as well.” Ning knew in his heart that once he allowed love to enter the fray, this demonheart tribulation would become truly dangerous.

.....

However...Ning wasn’t able to control the demonheart world.

As a result of this visit, Ning’s had been firmly engraved into Ninelotus’ mind. Thus, she came back repeatedly to visit him.

“This is my senior apprentice-sister, Yu Wei. She’s a true genius of

our Black-White College," Ninelotus said.

"But of course, I cannot compare to Immortal Darknorth." Yu Wei smiled as well. As soon as Yu Wei had seen Ning, she too had felt an inexplicable attraction towards him.

Within the demonheart world, both Yu Wei and Ninelotus found themselves uncontrollably drawn to Ning.

However...Ning's heart was filled with misgivings, and so he always moved to prevent a relationship from blossoming between them.

Time flowed on.

Decades passed in the blink of an eye.

Very early on, Ning had acquired the Starseizing Estate. By now, he had already reached the seventeenth stage of the [Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens].

Yu Wei and Ninelotus were as close as real sisters, so close that they didn't differentiate between 'mine' and 'yours'. The two of them settled into a residence within Swallow Mountain, not too far from where Ning lived. The two of them felt certain that one day, their sincerity would move Ji Ning. Unlike in the real world, in this demonheart world, Ninelotus and Yu Wei were both completely devoted to Ji Ning. In fact, both of them threw away everything for his sake, and Ninelotus gave up her clan as well.

Now, in the demonheart world...the storm finally swept through the Three Realms!

Within the demonheart world, Ning allowed his Primaltwin to undergo its tribulation. The tribulation of the demonheart world was completely illusory, and so the demonheart tribulation lasted for but an instant before it ended, resulting in his Primaltwin becoming a Celestial Immortal.

With the entire Three Realms being shaken by this storm, Ning

naturally allied with the Northmont clan of Stillwater. Although he didn't truly enter into a relationship with Yu Wei and Ninelotus, the two of them continued to wholeheartedly pursue him. The Dongyan clan was on very close terms with Ning, and the Dongyan Forefather, Ji Ning, Patriarch Unity, and others all joined together into an alliance to weather this storm.

The war began!

One battle after another began to erupt within the world of the Grand Xia. To protect his tribe, Ning was forced to go into battle as well. As the war progressed, however, he found it harder and harder to gain victory in his battles...and finally, he decided to undergo his Empyrean Tribulation!

There was one major problem with the demonheart world; there was no way to gain insights into the Dao here!

This was an illusory world; every single tribulant knew that in their hearts. As a result, they couldn't advance in the Dao in the slightest. Although Ning had already spent over a hundred years in the demonheart world, he hadn't improved in the Dao in the slightest. The only improvement he had was in terms of his Dao-heart; he was tempering his Dao-heart.

He was also able to improve his heartforce within this illusory demonheart world, but alas, Ning remained at the third level, the 'ruler' level. Although he did improve slightly, to reach the fourth level of 'mortal dust' was far too difficult. Anyone who could reach that level would be considered one of the truly most powerful experts of the Three Realms. The terrifying divine archers of the Three Realms and Old Man Yuan were all at the fourth level.

Within the illusory world, Ning could sense that he was gradually becoming unable to defend his clan from the storm, and so he decided to undergo his Empyrean Tribulation.

The Empyrean Tribulation was simply far too powerful.

The wind tribulation, the fire tribulation...they nearly caused Ning's death.

The thunder tribulation destroyed Ning's true body by merely the sixty-second thunderbolt.

He had failed.

His true body had failed its tribulation, and so the Starseizing Estate left him, having gone to search for another successor.

.....

Ning only had his Primaltwin left to him. Thus, like many other Celestial Immortals, he became embroiled into and pushed about by the waves of the storm. Yu Wei and Ninelotus both became Celestial Immortals over the course of the storm, but the two continued to follow by Ning's side. Ning, however, continued to act guarded, not allowing the relationship between him and the two of them to deepen.

The deeper their relationship grew, the easier it would be for Ning to sink into this world.

One battle after another!

Yu Wei and Ninelotus followed Ning at all times, experiencing life-and-death experiences with him. Finally, after eighteen thousand years, the storm came to an end. Ninety percent of the Celestial Immortals of the world of the Grand Xia perished, and even the Xia Emperor had died. As for major powers, no one knew how many had perished. Ji Ning, Yu Wei, and Ninelotus, however, had not died. In fact, even the Ji clan of Swallow Mountain had survived.

With the tribulation having ended, Ning returned once more to Swallow Mountain.

Ninelotus and Yu Wei continued to follow him. They, too, took up residence at Swallow Mountain. As for Yuchi Snow and Ji Yichuan,

they successfully overcome their tribulations and become Celestial Immortals towards the end of the storm. They, too, urged Ning to accept and wed Ninelotus and Yu Wei.

Eighteen thousand years!

They had experienced life and death together.

It must be understood that in the real world, Ning had only lived for a mere century. In this demonheart world, however, he had already lived for eighteen thousand years. If his Dao-heart had been slightly weaker, he would've long ago confused what was real and what was not. He would've willingly accepted that this demonheart world was the true world; after all, he had spent far more time in this world, which was a far more blissful one.

However...Ning, who had ruler-class heartforce, only felt an ever-greater amount of terror.

His father and his mother had actually both become Celestial Immortals? Yu Wei and Ninelotus had both survived the storm? Clearly, the demonheart world was doing everything it could to give him an incredibly blissful life. It had even ensured that Ning failed his Empyrean Tribulation, so as to clip his wings and lessen his ambitions.

Lessened ambitions...a blissful life...emotions...countless shared life-and-death experiences...eighteen thousand years...all of these things were having an impact on Ning.

"Ji Ning...how can you be so heartless? It's been eighteen thousand years, but you still remain this cold-hearted. Alright...alright...alright. I will never bother you again. I'll never irritate you again!" Ninelotus looked at Ning, her tears dripping downwards.

"Little sister Ninelotus and I will be leaving now. We'll never bother you again, you callous, cold-hearted man." Yu Wei's eyes were filled with pain as well.

Immortal swords suddenly appeared in both their hands.

"No!"

Ning couldn't help it; he instinctively knocked those two Immortal swords away.

"You won't even let us die? Even if you prevent us from dying, we can go to a place where you can't find us, then end our lives there." Ninelotus said with agony, "My sister and I no longer have anything worth living for, anyways."

"Let's go, little sister." Yu Wei took Ninelotus by the hand.

Ning just shut his eyes.

Was he supposed to just keep fleeing within this demonheart world? Keep hiding from everything? Was this right, or was this wrong? Why was it that by fleeing...these emotions were only causing him even greater agony?

"Don't go," Ning suddenly said.

Yu Wei and Ninelotus had already turned away, but now their bodies both shook. These two peerless beauties, one dressed in white and the other dressed in black, both turned to look at Ning. They had an eager look in their eyes, a look that bespoke of how they had waited for eighteen thousand years...a look that was about to melt Ning's heart.

"Ji Ning, are you truly..." Ninelotus and Yu Wei both looked at Ning.

"Don't go." Ning walked to them. "I don't want you two to go." He reached out with his arms, taking Yu Wei and Ninelotus into his embrace.

Yu Wei and Ninelotus each clung to one of Ning's elbows, gently leaning against him.

Ning, however...could sense that his Dao-heart was wavering and growing blurry.

He understood...

That he had taken yet another step towards sinking into this world.

When he took the finally step and completely sank into it...his soul would be extinguished, and he would die.

.....

Ning began to live together with Ninelotus and Yu Wei. They truly were a trio of Immortal lovers. The Three Realms were in a state of peace, and the Ji clan had nine Celestial Immortals within it; Ji Ning, Ninelotus, Yu Wei, Yuchi Snow, Ji Yichuan, Uncle White, Autumn Leaf, Spring Grass, and Little Qing. Everyone Ning cared about was alive... and in fact, all of them had become Celestial Immortals.

His life was peaceful and beautiful. In fact, this was what Ning truly desired in his heart.

To be carefree...to do what he wanted to do...

To be together with his loved ones...to live a simple, happy life...

Both Ninelotus and Yu Wei bore him children. To teach and rear children could be quite frustrating, but it was also quite blissful and happy.

.....

Bliss.

Ning had never been so blissful. Not in his previous life, and not in this one. This demonheart world, however, truly was very blissful and very perfect.

"No wonder it is rare for a single new Celestial Immortal to appear within the world of the Grand Xia, even after the passage of a million

years. No wonder countless Void-level Earth Immortals have attempted their tribulations but failed." Ning felt agony in his heart. He knew very well that all of this was a lie...but he had spent more than thirty thousand years here. A hundred years in the real world... thirty thousand years here...even Ning's Dao-heart was finding it hard to extricate itself from this demonheart world.

In fact...he was beginning to feel slightly unwilling to extricate himself. He didn't want to let this all be destroyed.

.....

The demonheart world.

It was night.

A little boat was drifting about in the waters of Serpentwing Lake. Ning was seated in the lotus position within that boat. He was by himself.

"Am I really...going to sink?" Ning could already sense that his Dao-heart was growing blurrier and blurrier. Clearly, it was becoming increasingly corroded.

Ning stared at the distant Brightheart Island. That island had all the people he loved the most; his father, his mother, Ninelotus, Yu Wei, Uncle White, Little Qing, Autumn Leaf, Spring Grass, and his children. All of those relationships, all of those emotions...they were like chains that had dug their way deep inside him. As more time passed, the chains only dug deeper and deeper. Thirty thousand years of life here...it was incredibly hard for him to shake them off.

"But..."

"But...!"

Ning gritted his teeth, blood becoming to come out from his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth as he forced the words out. "It's all fake.
FAKE!!!"

When Ning said these words, he felt as though a knife was scraping against his heart.

"It's all fake..."

"Because..."

"I want all of these things to become real. I want all of them to come back to life in the real world!" Ning's Dao-heart was like a tiny blade of grass that had become completely trapped by countless metal chains...but that blade of grass continued to struggle and grow. Although the chains tried to suffocate it, tried to drag it away, the blade of grass continued to survive and grow.

"I am myself!"

"I AM THE RULER OF MYSELF! Nobody and nothing can shake me; not thirty thousand years, not a hundred thousand years, NOTHING!!!" Ning sat there on his wooden boat, letting out an enraged roar. This was a roar directed against the entire demonheart world.

Just as Ning called these words out...

Rumble...

The colors of the world began to change.

Whooooosh.

Space itself broke apart.

A towering figure appeared within the distant, infinite void that was left. Its aura was incomparably powerful, and it was looking at Ning.

"So you are Ji Ning? You were the previous successor to the Starseizing Estate, yes? The [Starseizing Hand] divine ability is not to be learned by outsiders. I alone can possess it, and so...you can die!" An enormous hand appeared, instantly covering the entire sky. Carrying awe-inspiring power, it came crashing down.

Chapter 27 – Becoming Immortal

Ji Ning just closed his eyes.

Kill him?

Go ahead.

This was the demonheart world; killing him here wouldn't actually have an impact on his Dao-heart. In addition...Ning had a certain feeling. He had spent more than thirty thousand years within this demonheart world. He had allowed himself to sink deeply into this world multiple times before rousing himself once more. This had only resulted in his Dao-heart becoming even stronger. This sudden appearance of a 'new successor to the Starseizing Estate' was most likely the last trick the demonheart tribulation had to play.

BOOM! The giant palm suddenly came to a halt directly above Ji Ning. It was mere inches away from Ning. If Ning lifted his head up, he would be able to see the enormous fingerprints of that massive palm.

"Why have you halted..." Ning asked calmly, "...New master of the Starseizing Estate."

"You aren't afraid of death?" The towering figure said, slowing pulling back his enormous, sky-covering hand.

"If you want to kill me, kill me," Ning said coldly.

"I had thought that killing a previous owner of the Starseizing Estate would be quite an interesting affair...but you actually aren't going to fight back at all? How dull," the towering figure said. Ning did his best to try and make out what this new master of the Starseizing Estate looked like, but he wasn't able to see anything.

The towering figure waved his hand.

Whoosh!

One figure after another appeared in the air. There was a pair of white-robed Immortal lovers; Ji Yichuan and Yuchi Snow. There was also a white-robed, white-haired man who had an aura of calmness and tranquility about him...an azure-robed maiden...the mature Autumn Leaf...the young Spring Grass...Ning's Dao-companions Yu Wei and Ninenlotus...and their three children.

"Ning, son, have you just grown more powerful?"

"Why have you brought us here?" Yuchi Snow and the others all raised their heads to look towards the massive figure in confusion. They didn't even give Ning a glance.

Ning's face instantly changed.

"Ji Ning...you understand now, right? Yes...as you have guessed...I just used the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] to transform into your appearance," the towering figure said. "They believe me to be you! And, thanks to my power...they are completely unable to see you or hear your voice."

"What are you going to do?" Ning roared.

BOOM!

The towering figure suddenly stretched out with a single finger. He gave a single flick! The flick landed on the body of the white-robed, white-haired man. The man's eyes were filled with disbelief...and with a boom, he exploded, transforming into dust.

"Uncle White!" Ning called out in shock, feeling pain in his heart.

He bore tremendous love for Uncle White in the real world, and he had also spent thirty thousand years loving Uncle White in the demonheart world. Upon seeing Uncle White be slaughtered...Ning instantly felt utter agony in his heart, agony so great as to affect even his Dao-heart.

"There's plenty left. Don't worry," the towering figure said.

"What are you going to do?!" Ning knew that this was just nothing more than another illusion of the demonheart world...but the emotions he had built up over thirty thousand years wouldn't be so easily wiped away.

"I'm going to kill them, one by one," the towering figure said. "But of course...if you accept me as your master and owner, I can spare them."

"In your dreams," Ning said through gritted teeth.

Ning was no fool. He knew that the demonheart tribulation was part of the Dao of the Heavens; if he was to swear an oath to the Dao of the Heavens in the demonheart world to be a servant, he would truly and forevermore be lost.

"Then I'll continue to kill." The towering figure flicked his finger out again.

"Ning, son, what are you doing?"

"Ning, son, stop!"

"Master...you are going to kill me?"

"FATHER!!!"

The voices of his loved ones caused Ning to feel as though his heart was being torn apart. However...he gritted his teeth, just watching as they died, one by one.

"Ning, son...I know that you must be acting under some sort of duress." Yuchi Snow closed her eyes, dying peacefully.

"Ji Ning! What the hell are you doing!" Ji Yichuan's eyes were so wide, his eyelids were threatening to tear apart.

"Father. FATHER!" The three children who venerated Ji Ning were all

sobbing.

The slaughter continued.

Ninelotus died! Yu Wei died! Little Qing died! One by one...all of his loved ones died.

Those emotional chains, forged and tempered over the course of thirty thousand years, had long ago wrapped themselves firmly around Ning. When he saw them all be killed, one after the other... those chains began to tug at him with greater power than ever before. They were going to pull Ning down, to drag him under.

"Ji Ning...what a callous heart you have." The towering figure roared with anger. These words pierced deeply into Ning's inner heart; it was as though his family members were all pointing at him and saying these words. "What a callous heart you have."

Ning shut his eyes.

Even if all the people of the universe were to point at him in such a manner...he didn't want for his family to point at him.

Thirty thousand years...

But in the end...it was all fabricated.

All fabricated!

BOOM!!!

The world completely blew apart. Everything blew apart; even that towering figure blew apart.

.....

The real world.

"Ji Ning has already spent three full months within the deomnheart tribulation. This...this is simply...I've never even heard of something

like this!" Immortal Diancai looked nervously at the seated black-robed Ning. "A three month long demonheart tribulation...I really worry as to if Ji Ning can withstand it." His own demonheart tribulation had been far briefer.

"My master's demonheart tribulation also lasted for three months." Yu Wei caressed her belly, a look of worry in her eyes. She still remembered what Lu Dongbin had said to her: "Long ago...I was just a hair away from truly sinking into the dreams. Even now, I would be unwilling to undergo the demonheart tribulation a second time."

"Hurry and wake up!" Northson was truly worried as well.

They all knew that the longer the demonheart tribulation was, the more terrifying it would be.

Ning's demonheart tribulation had actually persisted for three months; this was utterly astonishing!

"Why has the Primaltwin's demonheart tribulation lasted for so long? Is it due to the karmic sinflames?" The distant elder in the Daoist robes was watching quietly as well. All he could do was watch and wait; Ji Ning would have no one to rely on but himself, if he wanted to wake up from the demonheart tribulation.

Suddenly...

Everyone's gaze turned towards Ji Ning...because the black-robed Ning had just opened his eyes.

"He woke up," Uncle White said with surprise and joy.

"Master succeeded! Wahahaha, he overcame his tribulation and became a Celestial Immortal!" Little Qing seemed to have gone a bit delirious with joy.

"Junior apprentice-brother!" Yu Wei was extremely excited.

All of them were.

As for the black-robed Ning, he just thought there. His thoughts, his mind...everything was slowly coming back to him from the demonheart world. Only a long moment later did he realize...that his face was covered with tears.

He loved and longed for everything he had within the demonheart world. Everyone he cared about was still alive. It had all been a dream...but that dream had lasted for thirty thousand years, far longer than the mere century he had spent in the real world. He wanted to forget it all, but...how?

"I'm sorry," Ning said softly.

He knew that those 'family members' were all just an illusion...but Ning still said those words.

"No wonder Master also shed tears after he successfully overcame his tribulation," Ning said softly to himself. "This demonheart tribulation really is..."

Only now, after having escaped the demonheart world, did Ji Ning truly understand how terrifying that illusory world had been. In truth, he had danced at the very edge of truly falling into the abyss and never returning. Things had grown especially dangerous for him after he accepted and reciprocated the love of Yu Wei and Ninelotus! After having accepted their love, he now had even more ties to that world.

However...fortune and disaster rode together! Accepting their love did indeed make him sink even deeper into the dream, but precisely because of that, when he successfully struggled to shake off his chains and take control over himself once more, his Dao-heart had reaped even more rewards.

If he hadn't sunk into the dream, he wouldn't have been strengthened by the awakening.

But if he had sunk too deeply into it...he would have died.

Fortunately, his heartforce had reached the peak of the 'ruler' stage; otherwise, he wouldn't have been able to withstand the demonheart tribulation.

.....

An Immortal melody rang out as auspicious clouds descended from the heavens and golden lotuses began to bloom throughout the area.

A terrifying presence descended, pouring the energy of the natural world into Ning's body. The universe itself began to transform Ning's Primaltwin.

"This is...?"

The black-robed Ning could clearly sense that the energy of the natural world, with the invisible help of the Dao of the Heavens, had begun to compress all of the energy within his body. His soul completely fused with his golden-lotus Primal; in fact, even his Zifu Region began to merge into the golden-lotus Primal, as well as the Sole-Ki Pearl of Primalwater itself.

Crack!

The lotus seed-head at the top of the golden lotus gave birth to a tiny little golden lotus seed. This was the most important thing for Celestial Immortals, True Immortals, and even Golden Immortals of the Great Firmament...the golden pellet, the Jindan!

As the Jindan flew out, the Zifu Region, the Sole-Ki Pearl, and everything else vanished. In fact, the body of the Primaltwin Ning was changing as well, transforming into a Celestial Immortal's body, a body that was designed and created through Celestial Immortal energy.

"Jindan?" The black-robed Ning murmured to himself.

This was the very core of his entire life essence...this tiny little

golden pellet.

This Jindan possessed utterly inconceivable power. It merged all power into it, melting everything into a dazzling, beautiful golden luster. A perfect Jindan would contain even the soul and the truesoul within it; there would never again be any distinction between them! In fact, the Jindan also contained a dimension within it that held an enormous amount of Celestial Immortal energy. The energy of the natural world was drawn into the Jindan, and even magic treasures could be stored within it.

Breathe in. Breathe out. Ning sensed his body transcending, one breath at a time, as Immortal energy flowed throughout his entire body.

"Ji Ning."

"Junior apprentice-brother."

Only now did Immortal Diancai and the others fly over. The black-robed Ning smiled towards them in welcome.

"Ji Ning, congratulations on your Primaltwin overcoming the tribulation. Nine nine-sets of thunder tribulation, and a three month demonheart tribulation...I've never even imagined something like this happening." Immortal Diancai looked at Ning. "I, Diancai, actually have a disciple like you...ahahaha, I regret nothing in life, nothing!"

"Master, you are absolutely incredible. I admire you to death!" Little Qing, in the form of a little azure serpent, immediately coiled herself Ning's arm with incomparable friendliness.

"I'm actually panicking right now," Ning said with a laugh. "My Primaltwin's tribulation was already as frightening as this...I can't even imagine what my true body's tribulation is going to be like."

"It's just another tribulation. Nothing is impossible for you, senior apprentice-brother," Northson said. "When you went to take part in the Conclave of Immortal Destiny, how many people tried to convince

you not to go? They all said that you didn't spend enough time training, that you'd be at a disadvantage. But not only did you go, you even became the champion of the Conclave. Afterwards, you only became more and more incredible. And now, you've actually overcome nine nine-sets of thunder tribulation and a three month demonheart tribulation. I'm completely convinced that nothing can possibly stop you."

"Me too." Yu Wei took Ning by the hand and smiled at him.

Everyone present had watched as Ning had grown up. In their eyes, Ning was an utterly monstrous talent; he had stunned them time and time again. Thus, they were convinced that Ning could do anything! After all, just now, they had personally watched as Ning had overcome nine nine-sets of thunder tribulation and a ridiculously long demonheart tribulation.

"Disciple." A voice rang out, and the flow of time around them suddenly changed.

Yu Wei, Immortal Diancai, and the others simply stood there, maintaining their earlier postures and poses. Ning, however, didn't feel as though anything had happened at all. He watched as an old man in Daoist robes came walking over towards him.

"Master," Ning said respectfully.

"I have some things to say to you," the old man said. "Your Primaltwin was successful, but I trust you noticed that your Celestial Tribulation was incredibly powerful."

"Yes." Ning nodded.

His Primaltwin, logically speaking, should have it much easier than his true body...and yet, it had still been forced to the brink.

"Your true body's tribulation will undoubtedly be utterly astonishing. There might be some unexpected variables that will cause it to be many times more deadly than this Celestial Tribulation," Subhuti

said. "Thus...I order you to master the Grand Dao of the Sword, master the art of applying heartforce to your soul, and reach the Sixth Cycle of the [Eight-Nine Arcane Art] before you can attempt it."

"Your disciple understands," Ning said respectfully. "Your disciple shall definitely work hard and make plentiful preparations."

"It is good that you understand." Subhuti nodded.

"Right...once you master the Grand Dao of the Sword," Subhuti said, "Because you have already condensed the five types of ki within your chest, you'll be able to join them together and instantly become a Pure Yang True Immortal."

Ning nodded.

"Now...the war between your Grand Xia and the Seamless Gate is about to begin. You won't be able to avoid it. The Seamless Gate will definitely try to come up with another way to kill you," Subhuti said. "As the saying goes, know thyself and know thy enemy; only then shall you be the victor in every battle. You need to conceal your true power. You absolutely must not let anyone know all of your secrets; once you are exposed, you'll be in danger."

"Your disciple understands," Ning said hurriedly.

"No, you don't." Subhuti shook his head. "I am forbidding you from telling anyone in the future about your full power. That includes both myself and your Dao-companion."

Ning was puzzled. "I can't even tell you or Yu Wei, Master?"

"You cannot." Subhuti shook his head. "The intelligence methods the Seamless Gate have available to them are beyond your imagination. If you hide everything in your heart, no one but you will know and the Seamless Gate will not find out either. But if you tell anyone at all...it might be revealed to them. Thus, for the sake of hiding your power, you are not to tell anyone at all about it."

Ning felt some amazement in his heart.

No wonder...

No wonder the intelligence capabilities of the Seamless Gate were so powerful. So long as he told anyone, there was a chance that it might be leaked to them? This was utterly inconceivable.

"For example...on the day that you become a Pure Yang True Immortal, you are not to tell anyone at all," Subhuti instructed. "The process of becoming a Pure Yang True Immortal doesn't cause much of a disturbance; if you don't tell anyone, no one will know."

Ning nodded.

It was different from when a Void-level Earth Immortal became a Celestial Immortal; a Celestial Tribulation was involved. There truly wasn't much of a disturbance caused when a Celestial Immortal became a Pure Yang True Immortal.

"Once I become a Pure Yang True Immortal, I won't be able to hide my Pure Yang energy," Ning said.

"I have a magic incantation that you can use to hide your energy signature. So long as you don't attack someone, they won't be able to realize your true power." Subhuti handed over a bamboo scroll.

Ning immediately accepted it.

"The storm has come to the Three Realms." Subhuti let out a soft sigh. "The more the enemy knows about your capabilities, the faster you will end up dying. Your Grand Xia, for example...it holds multiple individuals who have broken through to become Pure Yang True Immortals, but they've been hiding it all along. Some have been hiding it for trillions of years. The abilities of the Seamless Gate...there is far, far too much that you do not know about them."

Ning felt astonishment in his heart.

So the Grand Xia actually had multiple Pure Yang True Immortals hidden within it? Still, that made sense; on the surface, the Xia Emperor claimed that he was the sole Pure Yang True Immortal present. If that was true, that really was quite pathetically weak.

"I've already given you your instructions. Do not forget them. I won't be able to protect you at all times, during this storm; in fact, not even the seven Empyrean Gods by your side might necessarily be able to emerge from their Starseizer world to rescue you in time." Subhuti looked at Ning. "If you want to stay alive...you will primarily have to rely on yourself."

"If my guess is correct..."

Subhuti lifted his head. "Both sides, the Grand Xia and the Seamless Gate, are already secretly preparing to launch the war. I expect that it will explode onto the stage within a month. You have to be careful."

After finishing his words, Subhuti turned and walked away, departing gracefully.

"Your disciple shall remember your words," Ning said respectfully.

"What's wrong, Ji Ning?"

"Junior apprentice-brother?"

Immortal Diancai and the others next to Ning all returned to normal. Just now, the flow of time had been changed for them, and so although Ning and Subhuti had spent some time chatting, Immortal Diancai and the others only felt as though an instant had passed. They didn't see Patriarch Subhuti at all; naturally, they had no idea as to what had just happened.

"Nothing. My master was helping to protect me; he just left." Ning laughed. "Let's go. Let's go back to Brightheart Island."

"Right." They all followed Ning in flying back towards Brightheart

Island.

As they flew through the air, they saw the Golden Crow beginning to rise.

"The wind and the rain are coming..." Ning mused silently to himself, "Within one month, eh?"

Glossary

PEOPLE:

Gods:

Pangu : The creator deity who made the universe, the Fiendgod of Primordial Chaos.

Nuwa : The creator of humans, currently supposedly the most powerful god in existence and the only one to reach Pangu's level.

Cui Jue : The Lord of Cui Palace, the First Judge of the Dead. Also from Earth.

Grandma Meng : Dispenses her special 'elixir' in the land of the dead, which causes the dead to forget their memories before being reincarnated.

Ji Clan :

Ji Ning : The main character of this novel.

Ji Yichuan : The father of Ning, nicknamed the 'Raindrop Sword'. Number one expert of the Ji clan of the West Prefecture.

Yuchi Snow : The mother of Ning. Member of the Yuchi clan.

Ji Ninefire : The Patriarch of all five prefectures of the Ji clan.

Ji Young : The Prefecture Lord of the Ji clan of the West Prefecture.

Ji Lee : Nicknamed the 'Fire God', the number two expert of the Ji clan of the West Prefecture. Leads a faction opposed to Prefecture Lord Young.

Ji Jadewich : The son of Ji Lee.

Ji Grizzly : The adoptive son of Ji Lee, had been taken in as an infant by a grizzly bear monster.

Ji Redflower : Friend of Ji Yichuan, rides an Azure Firebird.

Spring Grass : Also known as 'Miwa'. One of the two maidservants of Ning who took care of him as he grew up.

Blacktooth : The father of Spring Grass, and the chief of Blacktooth

Tribe.

Autumn Leaf : One of the two maidservants of Ning who took care of him as he grew up.

Blindfish : The number one archery expert, serves the Ji clan.

Mowu: An experienced Ninefang Warrior, loyal to Ji Yichuan. Follows Ning on his first adventure along with Autumn Leaf.

Ironwood Clan

Ironwood Zhan: A late Ki Refiner Xiantian expert of the Ironwood clan. Has a Bi'an Tiger as his spirit beast. Wielded the **Blackwood Vinewhip** as his weapon.

Miscellaneous

Juhua Immortal : A powerful Loose Immortal who lived for millions of years. Controlled an Immortal estate which he was the third master of.

Rampart : The disciple of the Juhua Immortal. Died somewhere.

CREATURES:

Godbeasts :

Armored Wurm : A dragon type Godbeast that seems to be like an Ankylosaurus.

Whitewater Hound : A large, snow-white hound-type creature. Ji Yichuan has one, who once saved Ning and Snow.

Emerald Skyserpent: A serpent-type Godbeast, one of the more powerful creatures in Eastmount Marsh. Fought against Ning several times when Ning was at the peak Houtian stage. Capable of 'Void Blink' upon reaching the 'one with the world' level.

Howling Moonwolf :

Earthquake Rhino :

Redclawed Goldenraven :

Thundersea Owl :

Landwyrm :**Other Monsters :**

Serpentwing : A named late Xiantian level winged serpent, lives in Serpentwing Lake.

Azure Firebird : A flying fire-type bird-type monster. One is in service to the Ji clan of the West Prefecture.

ITEMS:

Dao Battle-Armor: A type of armor that allows multiple users to join their strength together.

Dao-seal : A magic scroll imbued with certain powers, such as the 'Divine Movement Seal', 'Light Body Seal', and more.

Kalestone : A naturally occurring gemstone which is like a 'bag of holding', able to store a certain amount of materials in an extradimensional space.

Goldstar Shirt : A naturally occurring treasure which protects against all attacks below the Xiantian level.

Darknorth swords : A set of three swords, extremely sharp. Originally a damaged 'magic treasure' of the 'flying sword' variety that was ranked. Purchased by Ning.

Blackwood Vinewhip : A magic treasure previously held by Ironwood Zhan.

Traceless Talisman : A single-use talisman that can allow a person to travel ten thousand kilometers in an instant.

TECHNIQUES:**Sword Techniques:****Possessed by the Ji Clan :**

[Raindrop Sutra]: The most defensive of the Ji clan. The technique

which Ji Yichuan became famous for using, thus being nicknamed the 'Raindrop Sword'. Includes the attacks: '*Drizzling Rain*', '*Rain Line*', '*Raindrop Pierces Rocks*', '*Thin Streams Flow Forever*', '*Tempest Curtain*', '*Watertight*', '*Eternally Fresh Waterflow*', '*Merciless Waterflow*'.

[Thunderflame Sword]: The most offensive technique of the Ji clan. Only three stances were found in the burnt manual, but despite that, is incredibly powerful. No defensive stances. Includes the attacks: *Thunderflash Flint*, *Blazing Thunderclap*, *Moth Flies Into the Flame*.

[Polaris Secret Manual]: A very balanced, orthodox technique, part of the [Polaris Sword Manual].

[Illusion Sutra]: An insidious technique that could be applied to any weapon. Allowed one to hide their true powers and actions.

[Melody of 10000 Swords]: The first 'elite' swordplay the Ji clan obtained, which they themselves developed. The most complicated, yet also the simplest when mastered.

Formation Techniques

Yin Yang Twin Energy Formation : A formation which Ironwood Zhan of the Ironwood clan had, set up by using eight formation flags. Very powerful at the Xiantian level.

Lesser Thousand Sword Formation : A formation of an enemy of the Juhua Immortal, uses up to hundreds of sword-type magic treasures.

Fiendgod Body Refining Techniques :

Possessed by the Ji Clan :

[Crimsonbright Diagram of the Nine Heavens]: The technique Ning chooses. The unquestioned best Fiendgod Body Refining, but also the hardest to learn. One has to be able to sense the Great Yang (Sun) and the Great Ying (Moon), then absorb their energies. If one is extremely suited, the first time training it, small balls of energy will appear in the trainer's hands, with the left having the 'Moon' with a picture of an 'Osmanthus Tree', while the right would have the 'Sun' with a picture of the 'Golden Crow'.

[Calamity Fiend] , [Indestructible Blood Fiend], [Song of the Inferno], [Vajra Buddhist Sutras], [Freeform Soul] , [Eternal Mysteries of the Yellow Earth] , [Spirit Fox Sutra] , [Sutra of the Future Buddha]

Footwork Techniques:

Shadewind Steps : A unique set of footwork techniques which only Ning's mother, Yuchi Snow, knows. Taught to Ning.

Windwing Evasion : Another set of footwork techniques which only Ning's mother, Yuchi Snow, knows. Can only be trained at the Xiantian level.

Divine Abilities:

Kuafu Sunchaser :

72 Transformations :

Three Heads, Six Arms :

Houyi Shooting the Sun :

Heavenly Transformation: Windwing Evasion (see above)

Other Techniques:

Nuwa Painting visualization technique : A soul-strengthening visualization technique taught by Lord Cui. Supposedly an elite skill even in the Deva realm, much less the mortal realms.

Inner Visualization of the Shining Sun-Moon Buddha : The visualization technique used by the Juhua Immortal.

Waterflame Lotus : A technique which Ning develops during a night of meditation by a pool through a hint of the Dao which he came to understand.

LOCATIONS:

Grand Xia Dynasty : The empire which rules over the entire world. Trillions of years old.

Stillwater Commandery: The Commandery region in which Swallow

Mountain is located. Controlled by the Marquisate of Stillwater.

Dark North Sea : The unending ocean in the north of the world.

Where Yichuan and Snow met and conceived Ning.

Swallow Mountain : A massive area, where Ji clan of the West Prefecture is one of the local hegemons.

Serpentwing Lake : A large lake a hundred kilometers long in the Swallow Mountain Area. Lair to the Xiantian monster, Serpentwing.

Eastmount Marsh : A large marsh with a lake in the middle of it. Home to many Xiantian level Diremonsters.

TERMS AND PHRASES:

Power Levels :

Houtian : Lifespan of a hundred years.

Xiantian : Lifespan of two hundred years. 'Diremonster' is a term used to refer to monsters who have reached this level.

Zifu : The 'Violet Palace'. At this level, one will be addressed as Zifu Disciple. Lifespan of five hundred years. Generally capable of 'dividing the mind'

Wanxiang : 'Myriad Manifestations'. At this level, one will be addressed as Wanxiang Adept. Lifespan of eight hundred years. Generally capable of 'divine will', which allows them to control objects with their mind.

Primordial : Can be referred to as Primordial Daoist. Generally capable of 'divine sense', an extrasensory ability.

Void : Can be referred to as 'Land Immortal', or 'Earthly Immortal'. In the later levels of the Void stage, a heavenly tribulation will test them. If they fail, then they will die and their spirits will be extinguished. If a Primordial's body is destroyed but manages to escape with his soul, then he will become a 'Loose Immortal', whose power is roughly on par with the 'Earth Immortals'.

Celestial Immortal : Only at this stage can one be considered to have ascended beyond the Three Realms and no longer be formed by the Five Elements!

Insight Levels:

Basic => Advanced => 'One With the World' => 'True Meaning of the Dao'=> 'Dao Realm' => 'Dao Path'

The Greater Universe :

Three Realms : The 'Heaven' Realm, the 'Mortal Realm', and the 'Netherworld Kingdom Realm'

Six Realms of Reincarnation : Deva, Asura (these two are Heaven realm), Human, Animal (these two are 'Mortal' realm), Preta Ghost, Hell (these two are 'Netherworld Kingdom' realm)

Book of Life and Death : The book on which every person's fate is written, their birth, their life, and their death. A person can change their fate by their actions, however. Controlled by Lord Cui.

Miscellaneous Terms and Phrases:

Beasthead : Used to refer to an amount of gold that weighed ten pounds in the world where Ning was born into for his second life.

Fiendgod : Powerful creatures that were born from nature itself and possess unbelievable might. The creator of the universe, Pangu, was himself a Fiendgod.

Godbeasts : Monstrous beasts that have the lineage of the Fiendgods in them. Far more powerful than normal beasts.

Fiendgod Body Refining Technique : Techniques meant to build up the body and make it as powerful as a Fiendgod's. Far more powerful than Ki Refining of the same level. Cannot utilize magic treasures unless also training in Ki Refining.

Ki Refining technique : Techniques meant to build up internal ki energy, which allows one to use magic treasures at the Xiantian level.

Ninefang Warriors : A term for peak Houtian level warriors in the Swallow Mountain region.

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